This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

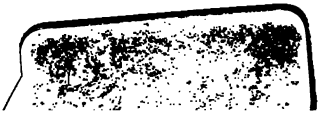
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`



THE

CHRISTIAN FRIEND

And Instructor.

PAPERS FOR THE COMFORT AND EDIFICATION
OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

JUDE 20.

LONDON:
W. H. BROOM, 25, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.
1882.

141 n 339

BODLEIAN LIBRARY
22JUN83
OXFORD.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
GOD'S SALVATION	1
THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER	8
THE COMING OF THE LORD	16
THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS	22, 72
"AS HE IS, SO ARE WE IN THIS WORLD"	29
THE CONDITIONS OF GUIDANCE	33
REBEKAH AND ABIGAIL	42
ON MINISTERING CHRIST	50, 101
"WHERE I AM"	57
"EMPTY VESSELS"	61
NEHEMIAH AND JUDE	66
THE NEED OF HOLINESS	67
WAITING FOR CHRIST	83
CAIN AND ABEL	85
"WHEN HE SHALL APPEAR"	88
THE CONSECRATION OF THE FIRST-BORN	93
THE GOOD SHEPHERD	113
"WIDOWS INDEED"	123
THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS BY THE CHURCH	130
THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS	136, 161, 193
THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS	141
REALITY	145
"TRAINED" AND "ARMED"	151
TRUE MINISTRY	158
DEPARTED LEADERS	167
CHRIST DEPARTING TO THE FATHER	169
"ONE THING I KNOW"	180

PAGE

CHRIST IN THE MIDST OF THE CHURCH . . . 183
THE ADMINISTRATIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS . . . 184
HAS CHRIST DESTROYED THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL? . . 189
THE FEAST AND THE SABBATH 197
EXPOSITORY JOTTINGS . . . 205, 268, 295
A READING 212
THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON 218
GOD'S ORDER 225
THE NIGHT OF THIS WORLD 231
THE TABERNACLE AND THE ALTAR 235
THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS . . . 244, 275
THE COMFORTER 258
"THE PEOPLE OF GOD" 261
THE HOUSE IN FAILURE, AND THE RESOURCE OF FAITH . 281
HOW CAN I HAVE PEACE? 287
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS . . . 303, 323
"ALL SAINTS" 309
THE THREEFOLD WITNESS 314
GOD'S ESTIMATE OF THE BLOOD 332

FRAGMENTS—

28, 60, 84, 100, 111, 157, 160, 179, 224, 232, 252.

POETRY—

THOU SHALT CALL HIS NAME JESUS 21
SATISFIED WITH THEE 40
SLEEP ON, BELOVED 112
THE CHURCH AS WIDOW AND BRIDE . . . 129
MOUNT OLIVET 191
THE CHIEF CORNER STONE 233
INFINITUDE 280
ACHOR 293
THE WELL IS DEEP 332

THE CHRISTIAN FRIEND.

GOD'S SALVATION.

FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND DELIVERANCE FROM SIN.

Romans iv. v. vi.

GOD'S salvation, and the full deliverance which it brings from all the power of Satan, which, being won by the death of Christ, should be the present enjoyed portion of every Christian, is only known to him who has accepted by faith two distinct statements of the word of God concerning it; namely, that as God's salvation surely deals with, and settles the question of, my *sins*, so surely does it also deal with, and settle the question of, *myself*. "Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," indicates the way of the settlement of the one (Rom. iv.), that is, our sins; for the Holy Ghost now present (Acts ii.) is now testifying to us (as He will testify to Israel, founded on the work of Christ, in the day of the new covenant), "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." But while this is true, it is His voice also saying we "are dead to sin," "buried with Him by baptism unto death" (Rom. vi.) (and therefore are we exhorted to reckon ourselves to *be* "dead indeed unto sin"); these and similar passages give us the other part of this "*great*" salvation; *i.e.* the end too of *ourselves* in that death of Christ in God's sight. Both are to be accepted and enjoyed only by faith.

Let us remember that doubts and fears, and a joy often followed by darkness and despair, form no part of God's provision for the poor sinner who comes to Christ. Long enough indeed has he known these, and deeply enough has he proved them, in the long and weary years of unbelief that have passed. Yet in how many cases do we find, alas, that these things are perpetuated, even looked upon as right, and too often encouraged as a proof of humility in the children of God! Some sad misunderstanding of the word "salvation," then, must surely exist in our own day, to produce such fruits, and such Christians, and such teachers, as these. The fault is not in God, nor in the Word—this cannot be; it is alone in ourselves. We have to learn, and often through deep sorrow, what we refuse to accept from God by faith. The exercises of Romans vii. teach us this. The soul there is wholly occupied with self as alive.

When God is first dealing with the soul, I find the Holy Ghost brings home to it, through the conscience, the burden of its sins. The cry is wrung from it, as from the prodigal, "I have sinned." It was thus when Peter was preaching (Acts ii.) to the multitude, and three thousand were pricked in their heart; and Peter's answering word is, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of *sins*." And so again in chapter iii., "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your *sins* may be blotted out." In the necessity for real heart work I agree with Bunyan that the soul must feel its burden, though I reject the necessity of passing long years in the Doubting Castle of Giant Despair, wherein he immures Christian for a time, even when far advanced on his journey. And what is it which introduces the

soul into liberty as to its sins when feeling the weight of this burden? It is this statement, accepted by faith, that another, even Jesus Christ, has been "delivered for our offences;" One who has also been accepted of God, proved in that He is "raised again for our justification." Very well, then, says the apostle in his simple argument, if this cannot be denied, and it is all of God, we *are* justified. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Here then I pass at once into unclouded peace with God as to the whole question of my sins, and "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. v. 1.)

But with how many souls is this blessed condition but transient as to their realization of it! How many we meet who look *back* to the time when they knew this peace, and passed for the first time into the blessed realization of it by faith! But since that time the brightness has become dim, and the clouds have returned again, for they have not gone on to accept with the same unhesitating, unqualified faith the statement of this sixth chapter; namely, that in the same work of Christ, wherein was obtained the forgiveness of my sins, I was "baptized unto His death." "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism unto death." The death and burial of me, the man, is as clearly taught, and as implicitly to be received as a matter of faith,* as that Christ was delivered for my sins.

Alas, that souls should stop short of this their full and blessed deliverance, a deliverance perfect because of God,

* This is of the first importance; for until this truth is received by faith, it will never be known experimentally, and souls never enter upon the blessedness of deliverance until they have learnt for themselves what the flesh is, that they are helpless, and that deliverance is found outside of themselves in Christ, according to Romans vii.—[Ed.]

and which He delights to give as the present and enjoyed portion of the believer in Christ! You find many who know and rejoice in the forgiveness of their sins, who do not, and will not, accept the truth that they are "dead" (Col. iii. 3), for it is here the cross comes in, and it, alas! weighs too heavily upon them. The forgiveness of their sins they will have; that is all privilege, all blessing; but the rejection of *themselves*, this involves the giving up of everything that ministers to man on the earth, and they may live as very good Christians (as the world speaks) without going quite so far as this. And this word death *is* a solemn word to those who accept it. It is the end of *the man who was living in his sins*, the end of his affections, of his desires, of his present world-life, and of all his future worldly hopes. What is left for faith is the new man alone, the man "in Christ," a new creation, where "all things are of God." And what does not *this* involve, as to the way in which that man should henceforth live upon the earth, no longer to himself, but "unto Him who died for him and rose again"? And why is it refused, but because the occupation of the daily life of many will not bear such an examination, and they have no thought that Christianity contains such a self-ignoring standard as this? But is not this the Christianity of the Bible, the Christianity of these three chapters? And can you have the joy of it if you refuse it?

My brethren, have *you* accepted it as God's truth that *you* are "dead"? Are you following no longer that course of things which once controlled and attracted you when you were alive in the world? "Having food and raiment" here, are you therewith "content"? and still content when you have *not* these, if it be His

blessed will to deprive you of them? Like the apostle Paul, who could say, "I know how to abound, and I know how to suffer loss, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need"—"in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness." A fool indeed was the world's estimation of such a man; but is there not in him a picture of the Christianity of the Bible before you? And do we not covet to be such men? dead surely, and useless, if "society" and man's day be the subject; but we live in a new life—waiting for the dawning of a new day, the day of Christ, a "morning without clouds." Do not misunderstand my meaning; a Christian may, and ought to, minister to man in his misery and in his sins; for out of his belly should flow "rivers of living water" (John vii. 38); but as to what *he* can minister to me, what would he add to a dead man? or what *can* he add to an "heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ"? For as to the world, I am dead—"whereby (the cross of Christ) the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. vi. 14; iv. 12.)

Now God in this epistle presents to us the forgiveness of sins, and also the death of the sinner in the person of the One who satisfies God as to the question of his sins. This is Paul's gospel (chapter i.), wherein, he says, the "righteousness of God" is revealed on the principle of faith. God's righteousness "upon all who believe" (chapter iii.) when we had none to offer Him (see chapter iii.), and Christ now before God instead of myself, in whom I am, according to Romans viii. 1. This is how the power and grace of God have triumphed. "It" (the gospel) "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." And this word *salvation*, thus brought out in the first chapter, is

no mean measure; it is what God's heart desires to be proclaimed to every poor sinner "for the obedience of faith." As it was in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke iv.) so it is now, "deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." To accept it is to be "free indeed," no longer a servant, but a son; "and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Gal. iv.) How appropriate the exhortation of the apostle to these law-keeping Galatians: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Yet though we are not Jews, and so not under the law of Moses, how often we make laws for ourselves, not reckoning ourselves dead, not accepting the truth, and thus are landed again under a yoke of bondage, in which case the true Christian liberty is not known. How common is the thought, in respect of worldliness for example, (though the principle applies to other things), "I ought not to be so worldly, nor to do what the world does." This is admitted; but it is the old man you are addressing as if alive; you have allowed yourself to "be" what is inconsistent with a dead man. Had you met the enemy at the outposts with the truth, "I am dead," because you have accepted it by faith, you had not been betrayed into a path and conduct you now sorrow over, a path of servitude, and not of liberty, in which you find yourselves in Rom. vii., and do not know the truth of Romans viii. as your abiding portion and joy.

We have been looking then at the two parts of this "great" salvation, deliverance from sins and deliverance from self, both of which are contained in it, and to be received by faith. There is one verse in connection with faith in this epistle, and faith both as to my

sins and as to myself, which I cannot but bring before you, as bearing on this subject: "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. xiv. 23.) If there is faith, it will manifest itself by works. If a soul knows that it has forgiveness of sins, and knows also as to the old man, that he was crucified, dead and buried "with Him," will it not manifest these truths in its life on earth? Let it be, then, in this connection (as it surely is) God's solemn word to us, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" —sin from the bondage of which Christ died to deliver us; for "he that is dead is freed from sin."

Let us remember, then, what Paul's gospel contained; let us remember too the blessed deliverance it brings to all who accept it. Have you faith in God about your sins? and also about yourself? A soul is *not* established who has not bowed in faith to both these truths which we have had before us. But the apostle prayed for these Romans that they might be thus established, and his concluding words sound to us to-day as fresh as when he uttered them first: "Now to Him that is of power to stablish you *according to my gospel.*" They come home to *us;* for we see all around that souls are *not* established according to this blessed gospel. Its deliverance is not accepted and acted on, and so its joy cannot be known. May we listen then to his words afresh, and may they be fulfilled in us all: "Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations *for the obedience of faith;* to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen." H. C. A.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

It is most important for us to remember, that all that which is the power of death in the unbeliever is the hindrance and blight of the fruit-bearing power of the believer's life, to which the energies afforded us in the divine Persons apply themselves. This is brought out into full light, with its specific remedy, in the graciousness of God in this parable. There is the case of the fowls of the air, the stony ground, the sowing among thorns, and in the good ground, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold. The first of these we know is the power of Satan—the power of death. There is no life in the soul. When the word of it is sown in the unbroken heart, the devil takes it away as soon as it is sown; he holds it in unremoved death. The Word is the power of life. "Of His own will begat He us by the Word of truth, that we might be the firstfruits of His creatures." It is indeed *the lie* of the devil, by which he brought in death, and holds men in it—in which he is a murderer; so, on the other hand, by the truth of God are we made alive.

But there is One (Himself indeed *the* Word) who is specifically the quickening power, even the Son of God. "The second Adam is the quickening Spirit." He then who vindicates from this state of death, and makes alive, is the Son of God. The Son of man sows the seed, but it is the Son of God which quickens. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." It is the special distinctive character of His Sonship, that He quickens

with divine power, as indeed none else could. (Compare John v. 21, 24, 26.) This is most explicit; and no one acquainted with Scripture can have failed to recognize this power of life in the Son of God as distinctly representing His power and character. He declares Himself, "I am the resurrection and the life;" and this by His word, "Lazarus, come forth." The results of this we shall not follow; but we have the Son of God, by the Word, destroying the works of the devil in the state and power of death. This is the first case of the parable. That which is in Him is the opposite power, which overcomes the evil case mentioned; and a man brings forth thirtyfold, for being really alive he must increase and bring forth fruit.

But there is another case put, not apparently desperate, but equally destructive—the receiving the word into shallow ground. There was no root. It was received superficially; it speedily "sprang up *because* it had no deepness of earth;" it had no searching process of power in which it entered into the conscience and quickened the inner man. It rested in the natural affections and understanding, which are after all *the flesh;* it is received merely by the natural feelings, and therefore immediately acts, and with joy, since it reaches not the conscience; and the same natural feelings were of course as speedily acted on by trouble and persecution, and "immediately they are offended." (Compare Mark iv.) This, then, is all merely the flesh, and comes to nothing. To this we know how uniformly the Spirit is opposed. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other." "They that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; and they that are after the

Spirit, the things of the Spirit." "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds," &c. It needs not to multiply passages of Scripture to show the opposition of these two; but we must observe we have *here* in the Spirit the antagonistic power which overcomes the flesh; and assuming a man to be alive, still does so. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit;" hence we know that this case is still the natural man, and that the things of the Spirit are what he has never received, though affections or intellect may have been moved or delighted with the marvellous plan of redemption. But the same point holds good in a believer; that is, we find when men do not walk in the Spirit, of course they are profitless and low in their state. It is in mortifying the flesh by the Spirit that the fruits of the Spirit find comparatively free growth —it produces sixtyfold. This, then, is the contrast here —the flesh and the Spirit; and we find in it that the fairest form of the flesh, the apparently joyful reception of the Word of the kingdom, whether it be in affection or intellect, comes to nothing; whatever it be occupied on, it is but "the desires of the flesh and of the mind."

The third case, compared with other Scriptures, is equally clear, I think. The hindering power is declared directly: "the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things." (Compare Mark iv.; Luke viii.) Now the world, and the love of it, we continually find opposed to the Father. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." "Love not the world, neither the things of the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not

in him." The hatred of the world to the Son showed that *it* was not of the Father; and the children were not of this world any more than the Father, as allied to Him, even as Christ the Son was not of the world.

Every one familiarly and spiritually acquainted with the Gospel of John must have noticed the opposition between the world and the Sonship of Christ; one being associated with the Father, and the other directly opposed to the glory of the Father, in the great question of that Sonship in which it alone was known. Our Lord thus concludes the whole presenting of His work and His people to the Father: "O righteous Father, the *world* hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me." The whole chapter illustrates the question. Now we shall hence well understand the opposition between the two, and how "He who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil world," closes that statement by saying, "And I have declared unto them thy name, and I will declare it, that the love," &c. But in the believer, even when not only quickened, but *in* the Spirit exercising himself to mortify the deeds of the body, who recognizes at once the evil of the flesh (though we are little aware how subtlely and widely its beguiling and deceiving influence is spread, how fair a form inbred selfishness may assume), and in whom, in an ordinary sense, the flesh is habitually in a measure mortified, how often do we find the world holding a prevailing power and recognized title over the judgment or habit, and the fruitfulness, comparatively speaking, utterly marred!

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples." Let us then recog-

nize, *à priori*, that is, from Scripture (excluding the consideration of the circumstances in which *the lie* of this world has power over our mind), that the world is a positive hinderer of fruitfulness, the much fruit in which the Father is glorified; and for this plain reason, that our sonship, our inheritance, the kingdom is not recognized. The devil, as he acts on us by the flesh, "the lust of the flesh," "good for food," or "of the eyes," and the like, is the god and prince of this world; and the Spirit in them that are quickened, where not dimmed and darkened by the spirit of this world, is not only the power of the difference of the carnal and spiritual nature, but bears witness that we are sons and heirs. Thus at liberty, we cry by it, Abba, Father; and the fruits are an hundredfold, where we are free from the system in which we are fettered. The energy of the kingdom is there, the Saviour of the kingdom is there, the stamp of the Father of glory, and hence, in deadness to the world, power over it. The whole stamp of nature is different; we are not of the world as Christ is not of the world. Accordingly, as we find the Lord the true vine, so we find the Father the husbandman, purging the branches, that they may bring forth more fruit. We may be isolated indeed, but isolated *sons*, upon whom the glory of the Father shines in hope and the power of inward association; the sons of God, though in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. In a word, the children of God (the God who hath called us to "His own kingdom and glory," the living God) is our distinguishing title; and, as the Jews were affianced to Jehovah, we are called to be "perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect."

I cannot pursue this subject farther here, though I

may touch on it, with the Lord's permission, at a future time. As regards the explanation of the parable, I would say a very few words more. The inseparableness of the evils, as well as of the gracious agents of covenant remedy, is not in question; the devil, the world, and the flesh are too intimately associated to need explanation of our distinct consideration of them, and I believe more intimately than people are commonly aware of. Of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit I need not speak; but while we have spoken of them in operation as to profit, we must not forget their unity in every act, whether of creation or anything else; they invariably act in one, and as invariably, as far as I see, in the same order; that is, by the Son, through the energy of the Spirit.

Another remark is necessary. Although we have looked at the love of the world as hindering the full characteristic fruitfulness of the children of God, and the knowledge and love of the Father as the contrasted character, we must remember that this knowledge in principle is the position of every believer. "I write unto you, little children, because you have known the Father," nor could we otherwise put all believers under this responsibility. But I believe it will be found, that the measure of the fruitfulness of the life that is in them much depends on their exercise in the truths here noticed and dwelt upon, and that the character of their fruitfulness also much depends on their fuller and deeper apprehension of the one or the other, and that the apprehension of the Father in the full development of the Sonship glory attaches quite a new character on the whole course of the Christian's life. This is our proper calling; and while we must

watch against the neglect of distinct reference to the Son, as administering the power of the kingdom "against the wicked one," to the Spirit, as overcoming or detecting the workings and deceitful power of the flesh, to the Father in contrast with the love of the world, a defective apprehension of the principle of heavenly glory will somewhere or other break down the efficiency of Christian service. The fulness of all was in our Lord; the fulness of all help in them is our practical responsibility; the enjoyment of fellowship with them our privilege.

Ill-proportioned Christianity, I believe, continually springs from the power of Satan, through neglect of or hindering the special power of one or another of the divine Persons, while indulgence of any of the evils is apt to throw us into the hands of Satan; and here is the wisdom of ministering to sick souls, for the source of the evil may be one, its manifestation may be another. How blessed to be able to refer to covenant assurance of a threefold Almighty help for the several difficulties one evil may bring. A believer will be healthful and strong against the enemy, as he has just reverence to all. I do not say that the believer's progress is, from knowing the Son, to the Spirit and the Father—far from it; but I believe the manifestation of the power and glory of their work will gradually unfold itself, even as the quickening by the Son will make the believer discern well the operations of the Spirit against the flesh, and both of these find their full development in the manifestation of the Father's glory, in the consciousness (if he grow healthfully) that His kingdom is not of this world. In some cases of unusual energy of divine life, we see by God's calling all these

apprehensions promptly developed, and the man consequently abundantly exercised, and his service great, corresponding to the knowledge received of the Son in the kingdom, as in the apostles Peter and Paul; but I must not outstep the practical part of the subject.

I am quite conscious, indeed particularly so, of the imperfection of these remarks; but I feel the importance of the subject deeply, and the basis of the view has been given: they are open to the correction or fuller application of those more versed in divine life. The wondrous and blessed grace of a developed covenant, the bright witness of the Son, and of the Father, and of the glory: the grace in which they minister to the necessities of those who have no help in themselves, while they are growingly understood and adored objects alike of communion and worship, separating from all that is not of themselves. I feel too, in speaking this, I am treading on holy ground, but ground which our God in His mercy has opened to us, and on which we are set to walk; freed from every fear, unless of not justly estimating it, by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; cleansed from all that could offend them by His blood, and acquainted with the boundless love which has brought these by it, while never reaching it, never able to be filled with it, knowing that it has reached even to us and filled us into its own fulness.

Let us also remember, that the indulgence in one of these seemingly remote evils brings in the power of the others; for God is not there. Thus Solomon's indulgence of the world brought in the indulgence of the flesh, and the consequence was the direct power of Satan in the idolatrous worship of his wives. We might mention similar instances, but I close for the pre-

sent. Only one thing it is important to remark. It is not either by speculation or knowledge these things are obtained, though they be ministered. "We are sanctified unto obedience." The Spirit of obedience is the great secret of all the present and practical blessings of the believer; for the Spirit is not grieved, and so becomes the minister of the grace and knowledge both of the Father and of the Son; and the poorest, simplest believer, walking thus, enjoys the blessings of the pledged faithfulness both of the Father, and the Lord, and the Spirit, to the blessed purposes of love in which we stand, and of divine glory. J. N. D.

THE COMING OF THE LORD.

Acts i.

THERE is much to remark in the way the coming of the Lord is presented to the disciples after the resurrection. They, poor things, after the Lord was risen, were still running on Jewish things, and looked for the kingdom to be restored. But God has His plan. He says, "No, the time is come for a testimony of grace to go forth, beginning at Jerusalem." There is another thing. They see Jesus go up; they gaze after Him. Their hearts are up with their Lord. So ought our hearts to be looking after Him; nothing ought to satisfy the believer's heart but the Lord Himself. Then the promise comes to them, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go

into heaven." This is the first putting forth of the coming of the Lord Jesus as the hope of the believer's heart;* and the security of it is in the absolute manner God presents it as His plan.

The mystery is the very essence of the Church. The Jews are waiting for a Messiah—the Church is on quite a different basis. We have pre-trusted in Christ. We know Him as One who has come, who has everything and yet nothing. What has a Christian here? Literally nothing. The infidel may say, "Show me something." I know what I have got—Christ in heaven. He is my anchor, my whole soul is resting there; my heart is in heaven with this Lord Jesus. The heavenly bride's place is that which Christ took below. He had nothing here. He could not turn to this or that person and say, "I can trust in him." His spring was in God. He could trust Him and Him only, and so with ourselves. If I have the Son's heart on the Father's throne, the Father's heart and house are opened to me. We find daily His sympathies can flow down to His people. While passing through the sand of the wilderness, our feet cut and bruised, Jesus has a heart that can sympathize, and make all "work together for good." What Polar star have you to guide you? None but the coming of Christ Himself. What hope have I apart from the coming of Christ? Literally none. The bride of Christ has nothing as a future save the coming of her Lord.

One thing very touching to the heart is the way in which Christ conforms our removal to His own. Because He loves His bride, no one can be trusted to

* It is the appearing rather than the coming of our Lord in this passage. But the principle abides.—Ed.

fetch her save Himself—not a power in heaven, not if legions of angels volunteered it. He will so arrange it, that all shall recall His own removal. He will present her to Himself. It is part of His special privilege as Son, to arrange all for His Father, as well as for the Church. He will purge the heavenlies; He will come down with the same chariot of cloud as that in which He ascended to fetch her up and present her to the Father. Every little thing in which we can be conformed to Him is sweet; but when it is something put on her by His own hand, it is sweeter still. Like the disciples, we too should want our Master back, want to see Himself. Personal love is the answer to that love which proved stronger than death. He proved His love and the fountain of His love to be entirely independent of them. He settled the matter with Peter, went through it with Thomas—proofs enough of love. Their hearts could not rest satisfied without being with "this same Jesus."

It is very sweet to have the Lord looking down on us here, but nothing like being with Him. What is the force of my saying, "This is a wretched, howling wilderness"? What is it but "Nothing can satisfy my renewed nature except to see Himself"? He set His heart upon His bride. He loved her, and gave Himself for her. The heart that gets the simple thought of the personal love of Christ to the Church, will be strengthened to encounter the perils of the wilderness. We have to be where He puts us, because the great thing is to taste His love, and I can taste it down here. There is no question but that I should taste it much more with Him; but if it is His will for me to stay, that makes me happy to stay. When

Christ is displaying power, there is Satan to oppose Him; it does not suit him to be in opposition where Christ is not.

Have you ever said, "Come, Lord Jesus"? Why do you say it? He is waiting; not satisfied till He presents His Church. Have you felt nothing will satisfy you but seeing Him and being like Him? Have you felt in the quick of your soul, that if God were to give you heaven without Christ, it would be a blank place to your hearts? Why do you say "Come"? Because God has not forgotten His own plan. God would have some associated with Him up there in the desire of the Holy Ghost: that is why you say "Come." It is part of God's plan about Christ. If God says, "I have chosen you, and am working part of my plan for my Son in you," I do not understand people saying, "Oh, I am not this or that!" You would be far more humble, if you thought more about God, and less about yourself. Why do the sympathies of Christ flow forth to you? Dare you say, "Because I was so faithful to the sympathy He showed me yesterday"? Yet it does flow forth to you; and unless you are blind, you can lift up one stone after another, and find water flowing under all. Why? Because of what you are? No; He looked out for such bad clay, that no other potter could make anything of it. There is only one way God can keep such vessels full, and that is by keeping you close to the gushing fountain.

Do His sympathies depend upon you? Not a bit. We cannot be trusted with the full amount of joy. We should be puffed up. Peter must have his hands tied, or they would be busy to take off the crown of martyrdom. Are you better than Peter? Nay, but worse.

You are looking for Christ from heaven. Your looking will not bring Him, but you will be happy if you are looking. The only spring of living waters Christ knows is in God. It is not the will which Christ sets in movement in your heart that is the power, but Christ's love. I am ashamed when I think of Christ's patient waiting to fetch us. Do you think Christ, in the glory of the Father, has a heart large enough to have a care to come and fetch us, and are you not ashamed? He says, "There is that poor thing stumbling through its duties, but I will soon go and pick it up." The Father's house is higher up than the manifestation of glory, the New Jerusalem, the court of the kingdom, but Christ will delight for the world to see the Father's glory in a way it can admire. But there are sweeter things than that—home-ties, relationships. The name of the Father hardly comports with the pageantry of rule, but it meets our hearts when He says, "Surely I come quickly." (Rev. xxii. 20.) Here is the answer to the call of the Bride. God's thought when man had forgotten the hope is, "I will trim the lamp again." I believe God is moving, and that it is impossible in the riches of His grace that there should be none to meet His testimony. Even in Malachi some were looking for Him. He could not have come three hundred years ago, when all was in gross darkness; but now, were He to rise up from the throne this night, there are many who through grace from the depths of their hearts have cried, "Come, Lord Jesus." "Does your heart answer, "I am one"? May it be our desire that He would revive the testimony in the hearts of His children!

G. V. W.

THOU SHALT CALL HIS NAME JESUS.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men."—Luke ii. 13, 14.

What melody is this,
That wakes at Jesus' name
Ten thousand thousand chords of bliss,
And everlasting fame!

What rapture fills my soul,
Immanuel here to find!
What symphonies around me roll,
From God's eternal mind!

Oh, dearest, best of names,
Harmonious mystery;
Each sweet vibrating thought inflames,
Each whisper tells of Thee.

Creation's sole desire,
Her Lord and Morning Light;
Responsive soon she'll join the choir,
And in His praise unite.

Fulfil, O Lord, Thy vow,
And quickly come again;
The whole creation groaneth now,
And travaileth in pain.

Lord Jesus, burst her chain,
Bring in Thy jubilee;
And let all Nature's loud Amen
Proclaim her liberty. C. F. C.

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

IN looking into the epistle to the Ephesians, we come to the first of those canonical and inspired letters, which were written by Paul during, or about the time of, his imprisonment at Rome. During the time of his detention at Cæsarea he was apparently quiet. When at Rome he resumed his apostolic service, not by visiting churches, but by writing to certain assemblies. The letters written at that time are five in number, and called respectively an epistle to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Hebrews. A special feature in four of these is the ministry of Christ in a way not previously set forth in writing. He had treated of the gospel of God when addressing the Romans, his latest letter ere he went to Rome. He treats of the counsels of God, which concern Christ and the saints, in that to the Ephesians, which very possibly was his first letter from his prison in the metropolis of the habitable world. Addressing the Philippians, he tells them what Christ was to him, and what He should be to every saint of God. Writing to the Colossians, he expatiates on the fulness in Christ the Head for every member of His Body; and in that to the Hebrews he sets forth how the Lord Jesus Christ surpasses both Moses and Aaron, and how by His death blessings everlasting in duration are enjoyed, which never could be procured by the keeping of the law and the observance of the Mosaic ritual.

The epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to those who were of the race of Israel. This to the Ephesians

was written to those who had been Gentiles, so it developes God's counsels which concern those once far off, as much as those once nigh. But whether, as some have thought, and the supposition is no modern one, it was really intended as a circular letter for assemblies chiefly composed of converts from among the Gentiles, as that to the Hebrews was designedly for those who had been Jews, is a question which, though raised, is perhaps incapable of definite solution. Those who advocate this view have supposed that, sent to different assemblies, the name of the assembly to which a copy was forwarded was inserted at the commencement; hence, though circular in character, it became in that way local in application. The omission of the words "in Ephesus" by the two oldest uncial MSS., the Vatican and the Sinaitic, favours this view; and internal evidence, derived from the pointed way in which St. Paul addresses those who had been Gentiles (i. 13; ii. 11, 17; iii. 1) as well as writes of them (i. 15; iii. 2), and the absence of any local reference to the church in Ephesus, with which Paul was well acquainted, in no way, to say the least, militates against this view. Without, however, pronouncing an opinion definitely on this point, all will agree that, whether addressed really only to the saints in Ephesus, or to all those who had been formerly Gentiles, this epistle contains something like a charter of the privileges, in which they shared equally with their brethren called out from among the Jews; and this is connected with the unfolding to us of God's counsels about His Son. Now these counsels have reference to the inheritance which He will possess; the Body, which is His fulness, or complement; and the Bride, for which He died, and which He will present to

Himself; viz., the Church glorious, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing.

These counsels being dwelt on, the mystery first made known to Paul by revelation, and now, as he writes (Eph. iii.), made known to God's apostles and prophets in the power of the Spirit, is necessarily treated of. The suitability of the vessel selected for this purpose we can readily perceive. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and at the time of his inditing this letter he was a prisoner of Christ Jesus on their behalf. It was fitting, then, that by the apostle of the Gentiles these counsels, which related to the mystery, should be set forth. It was equally fitting that when a prisoner for the Gentiles he should place on record by divine guidance the unchanging counsels of God, in which they were so deeply concerned. By Daniel, a courtier at Babylon, and one of the seed royal of Judah, God made known the order, progress, and destruction by the Lord Jesus Christ of the four monarchies, which were to precede the establishment of God's kingdom in power over the earth. By John in Patmos, when experiencing in his own person the hostility of the fourth empire to the interests of God and of Christ, there was foretold the rise and complete destruction of that empire, in its last and apostate condition, by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ out of heaven. Paul and Peter had both fallen victims to its persecuting spirit. John, the last of the apostles, was then suffering from it. To outward eyes its power seemed irresistible. But to John was made known in a vision its crushing destruction at the hands of Him whose disciples and apostles it dealt with just as it chose. God selects fitting instruments by which to make known His will.

But before touching on the divine counsels about the Lord Jesus Christ, the saints are taught God's counsels in grace towards them; and Paul's heart, evidently filled with a sense of the grace thus displayed, overflows in praise at the outset of his letter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." (i. 3.) Now who are the *us* here spoken of? He tells us, as he unfolds God's counsels in grace which concern them. They were chosen by God in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame before him in love, and predestinated as well to sonship according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which* He fully bestowed on them in the Beloved One, "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of His grace." In such a manner those are described who share in that fulness of blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. And that grace has abounded toward its recipients in all wisdom and prudence, God having made known to them the mystery of His will, which He has purposed in Himself for the administration of the fulness of times (*i.e.* the coming age), to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him, in whom believers from the Jews, like Paul and others, here called *we* (12), and believers from the Gentiles, here called *ye* (13), have their inheritance, to the praise of His glory. Further, all these have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, the earnest of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, to which Christians as yet look forward.

* This is the better attested reading, ἧς, instead of ἐν ᾗ.

Into what a range of truth does Paul here conduct us! divine counsels about the saints, divine counsels about Christ. Nothing for us apart from Christ. All here for us in Him, and more than what angels have, has God purposed on our behalf. (4, 5.) Further, He has communicated to us counsels concerning His Son, which concern us most closely, since we are to share in that which God has thought of for Him. Pre-eminence and supremacy are appointed for Him as man. In that, of course, He must stand alone. All things in heaven and earth are to be headed up in Him. In that inheritance we have part with Him, and have received the Holy Spirit, being sealed by it, which is also the earnest of the inheritance. And all this redounds to the praise of God's glory.

Do we ask what motive moved Him to act in grace toward us? The answer furnished us is simply the good pleasure of His will. Do we ask what is the measure of this grace? We read of the riches of it (i. 7), of the exceeding riches of it (ii. 7); and how it has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, through His making known to us the mystery of His will. Would any inquire what moved Him to head up all in heaven and on earth in Christ? We learn that He purposed this in Himself, who works all things after the counsel of His own will. It is to God, acting in the sovereignty of His will, that we are here turned. Sinners by nature, deserving only His wrath, we read of the exercise of His sovereign will, the carrying out of which none can effectually resist; and we learn how that will is active towards us in the fulness, the riches of His grace.

The divine counsels stated, the apostle next tells the

saints for what he makes supplication on their behalf, of whose faith in the Lord Jesus Christ he had heard, and of whose love to all saints there was manifest proof, evidences these of their conversion, and of the dwelling of the Holy Ghost within them. With Paul the knowledge of God's truth was to have a formative power over the soul. The Greeks sought after wisdom, and might engage their intellectual powers in discussions of theories and of dogmas. Christians however, instructed divinely in truths of which the learned Greeks were ignorant, were to remember that these revelations of the divine mind should have practical power over their hearts. So Paul prays that the eyes of their heart (not understanding) should be enlightened, their affections engaged in the truth revealed, that they might know: (*a*) The hope of God's calling. Of this calling he had written in verses 3–5. (*b*) The riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints. On the subject of the inheritance he had already touched in verses 8–14. He calls it God's, because, as with the land of Canaan (Josh. xxii. 19; 2 Chron. xx. 11), so with the things in the heavens and the things upon earth, God will take possession of them in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and the saints. (*c*) He desires that they should know the exceeding greatness of God's power to usward who believe, that power as displayed in raising up Christ from the dead, and setting Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principalities and powers, putting all under His feet, whom He has given to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body, the fulness, or complement of Him that filleth all in all. The Lord Jesus, here viewed as a man, is seen as raised, exalted, and in

accordance with Ps. viii. is to have everything put under Him. Further, and this the Old Testament does not mention, He has a Body, the Church, and that Body is His complement as the Christ who fills all in all.

This, the third subject of his prayer, is connected with that which follows. To this he now turns. The exceeding greatness of God's power, of which he has made mention—exemplified in the raising and exaltation of Christ above all created intelligences and powers —has been put forth on behalf of the saints, who have been quickened with Christ, and raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ. This power he wants them to know; and the mention of it necessarily gives the opportunity for dwelling on God's ways in grace, especially with those who had been Gentiles. This forms the subject of the second chapter of the epistle, and divides itself into two parts—connected first with their moral condition, and next with their former dispensational position. C. E. S.

(*To be continued, D.V.*)

THERE is the greatest difference possible between the ministry of Christ and the ministry of truth. The former makes nothing, but the latter makes everything, of man. As a consequence, the ministry of truth appeals to a wider circle; for the natural man can delight in the knowledge which increases his own importance; but the spiritual alone will respond to the ministry of Christ. It should never be forgotten, that while Christ is the truth, the truth is not Christ.

"AS HE IS, SO ARE WE IN THIS WORLD."

1 JOHN iv. 17.

THERE are few things in the divine record of deeper significance to the child of God than the statement that "as He is" (the Lord Jesus Christ in glory), "so are we in this world." On referring to it you will find that the Spirit of God gives this as the reason, and the only reason, for our having boldness in the day of judgment. Every soul then that has, or seeks to have, this assured confidence in view of that impending day, will necessarily receive with interest any unfolding from God's word of that concerning which the apostle speaks. Be it observed, then, that the Holy Ghost refers to a positive and absolute standing in the sight of God, not to a practical condition; and, further, that it is a present, everyday standing before Him of believers while in the world. It is true that the apostle does speak in the same verse of what is future, the day of judgment, and of the suited attitude of our souls in relation to it—boldness, of which more presently.

But now let us observe that there are two absolute things before us here. I. The positive *perfection* of divine love toward us—thrice blessed source of all our blessing—love with us is made PERFECT. Here is the primary and incomparable fact meeting us in all its priceless value for the deep and constant joy of our hearts, that God has not given us merely an earnest of His love, an instalment however handsome, but He has *perfected* His love toward us. The Spirit of God knew full well the tendency of souls to subjective truth,

which, all right in its subordinate place, is never right when made paramount. He therefore puts the objective before us in its divine precedence. What is then the objective thing here? Note it well, dear reader, for your soul's supreme solace. (1) Divine love, (2) Occupied *with you*, (3) *Made perfect* towards you. In the next verse (condescending to our weakness) He comes down to the level of what is purely subjective. Love begets love, and accordingly our love, that which His love has evolved, is here touched on. But does the love which is perfect in Him who is divine produce perfection of love in us who are human? Alas! no. Notice then three uses of the word "perfect." (1) His love *towards us* is perfect, (2) His love is perfect *in itself* (see verses 17, 18, where in each case the love is in divine connection), (3) There is a change. It is not said, however, that *our love* is not perfect (true enough, and hopelessly true), but that if we have fear we are not perfected in love; that is, in *His*. This, however, if true, is not hopelessly so; for our normal state is, that *we* are perfected in *His love*. Love and fear are incompatible, being essentially contrary in character. So long as both dwell in the heart there is distress of spirit or torment; for contending forces strive for mastery. The apostle seeks to strengthen our souls in the one that the other may be expelled. In other words, the Spirit of God educates our souls into so perfect a sense of the divine love that fear shall lose its place, being cast out.

II. The other absolute thing in verse 17 is, that *as* Christ is, so are we in this world. The former was an absolute *fact; viz.*, that love has its aspect towards us in its infinite, divine perfection. God is love, and His love to us-ward is absolutely and essentially perfect.

Love us less than He does He will not, and more than He does He could not. Nor is this love merely a quality, or even the essence of His nature only, but an active principle. Accordingly we have next an absolute *result*. The blood of Christ, the cross of Christ, the work of Christ, speak of it as you will, has its results here focussed in their relation to the believer. Do we think of ourselves naturally? Born in sin, conceived in iniquity, by nature lost! Or as living in sins, practising evil? Every soul guilty before God! Or even as believers, as to our practical state? "If we say that *we* have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." And "in many things we offend all." But, oh, the wondrous character of divine love! God, looking upon the face of our shield and His anointed, the glorified Man at the right hand of His throne, who is over all God blessed for ever, spite of all He has ever seen or now sees in us, and the tremendous disparity between Him and ourselves, so effectually have sin and guilt, death and judgment, been for the believer judiciously disposed of once for all, that He says, "As HE IS, so are we in this world."

III. Having looked at the result of divine love, we may notice further that the *effect* of His love in the present becomes the *cause* of our boldness in the future. For we read, "That we may have boldness in the day of judgment, *because* as He is, so are we in this world." Who would have the temerity to count upon boldness in the day of judgment because of his practical state now? But when it is seen that our positive standing before God, that eternal favour in which we are in Christ, is such that God makes no difference between the Son and the many sons, but declares that while

down here in this world we are before Him as Christ in glory, though not a particle of that glory be yet ours, what solid comfort, what established peace have we who have believed, even in view of that tremendous day! This word "boldness" is met with in two other places in the epistles, but uniformly as the effect of God's activity in His love toward us, and not as a result of any attainment of ours. In the first of these (Eph. iii. 11, 12) it is "according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have *boldness* and access with confidence by the faith of Him." In the other (Heb. x. 19, 20) it is the direct effect of the blood of Christ. "Having therefore, brethren, *boldness* to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," &c. Thus (1) His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus when He first brought me to Himself gave me boldness through faith in coming *to Him*, which was an entirely changed standing. (2) The efficacy of the blood, the new and living way opened, and the presence of God's high Priest, afforded to my soul the boldness of a worshipper in entering through the rent veil into the holiest of all, which is nothing short of *the very place where He dwells*, an entirely new *place*. (3) If my standing answers as to acceptance, to what Christ is before God, and His very place is mine now by faith, surely we may not refuse the sequence of this in God's eternity—boldness even yet again in the day of judgment; for "he that feareth is not made perfect in love."

May the grace that has set us in such cloudless, divine favour deepen in our souls so full and happy a sense of it that, His love with us being made perfect, we also may be made perfect in it. W. R.

THE CONDITIONS OF GUIDANCE.

It is remarkable that in the gospel of John, which presents Christ to us as the eternal Son, we see Him everywhere, and constantly, taking the place of the Servant. In accordance with this position we find Him asserting three things; first, that He did not come of Himself, but that He was sent by the Father; secondly, that He did not speak His own words; and, thirdly, that He did not do His own works. (See John v. 19, 36, 43; vi. 38–40; vii. 16, 28; viii. 28, 29; ix. 4; x. 36–38; xiv. 10, &c.) In a word, He came, as He tells us, not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. We call attention to this only for the purpose of showing that it was the maintenance of this subject and dependent position, which secured for Him at all times the perfect knowledge of His Father's will. This principle indeed is affirmed by His own words: "*The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth.*" (John v. 19, 20.) A careful consideration of the several points involved in this statement will furnish us with instruction as to the conditions of guidance for ourselves in all circumstances, and in whatever perplexities.

The first thing is that He could do nothing of (or rather *from*) Himself—that is, in the lowly place which He voluntarily assumed. His whole mission being to

accomplish the will of Another, He could not, while engaged in it, originate a single action. His will was perfect as He Himself was perfect, and yet He never allowed His will to govern Him in what He did. His meat was to do the Father's will, and on this very account He could do nothing of Himself.

And in this respect He is our perfect example. Unlike Him, our wills are utterly evil; and if they come into activity for one single moment, sin is the result. We cannot will that which is good. But God in His grace has associated us with the death of Christ, and as a consequence we ourselves, and therefore our wills as well as our sins, are gone in the cross. We have been crucified with Christ, and now it is not we who live, but Christ that liveth in us. This is the blessed place in which God has put us, and accordingly our true position before Him is that of having no will. We start with this, and hence should always take the ground of being unable to do anything of (or *from*) ourselves. Our own promptings, inclinations, suggestions, must be habitually refused, always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus; for if Christ is in us the body is dead because of sin. It would save us from many a snare, and many a mistake, and, we may add, many a sin, to maintain this place—this denying ourselves, and this taking up the cross in order to follow our Lord. It is, in a word, the fundamental condition for any knowledge of the mind and will of God. Hence it may be truly said, that when our own wills are in action it is impossible to ascertain the Lord's mind. (See John vii. 17.)

The second point is, that our Lord could only do what He saw the Father do; "for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." This

involved two things. First, His eye was always on the Father, and then there was a constant response to everything the Father was doing. If it may be so said, the Lord was ever on the watch for the slightest indication of His Father's will, and His feet were swift to run in the way of His commandments. He was therefore, in all that He did, the perfect expression of the Father's mind; and thus it was that His every act was a revelation, and consequently a presentation, of the Father to those around. (See John xiv. 7–11.) This also may be applied to ourselves. As He was in relation to the Father we are in relation to Himself. (John xvii. 18.) To know therefore what to do at any given juncture, it is essential that we should have the "single eye." When Gideon was about to attack the Midianites, he said to his followers, "Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do." (Judges vii. 17.) So it must be now with the Christian; he must look on Christ that he may do what he sees Him doing. As already said, his eye must be single; *i.e.* his eye must be on Christ alone, seeing nothing but Christ, desiring nothing but His mind and His glory. If the eye be diverted from Christ to self, to saints, to relatives, or to any other object for a single moment, it ceases to be single, and perplexity will ensue. But if the eye be single the whole body will be full of light; the mind of Christ will be known and enjoyed; the light of His own presence and counsel will fill the soul, and even the body will become a vessel of light.

But then, as with our blessed Lord, there must be the doing as well as the knowledge of the Father's will: "What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth

the Son likewise." The activity of the Father found a full and perfect response in that of the Son. With us, alas! it is often far otherwise. Our light, our knowledge, far exceeds our answer to it, and thus the very truth we delight to hold searches and humbles us in the dust before God. Without, however, pursuing this aspect now, we desire rather to press that our responsibility in any given circumstances, the moment we know His mind, is to follow the Lord. Our danger is often in going before Him; but if our eye is steadfastly fixed on Him to discern what He is doing, then the whole of our responsibility lies in following in His steps. As with the Israelites in the wilderness, who remained in their camp when the cloud rested, and commenced their journey when it moved forward, so with ourselves. If the Lord wait we must also wait, and if He advance we must likewise advance, so that, whether in inaction or action, whether in forbearance or in conflict, we may be simply the reflex of His own mind. To-day it may be, according to His will, that we should rest or rather endure; but to-morrow that same will might direct us to activity. Bearing this in mind, our only exercise will lie in detecting the Lord's path, and in seeking grace and strength to be found walking it. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me." (John xii. 26.)

There is a third thing. The Lord adds, "For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth." This addition is of the greatest importance. It might have been felt, from what has been already said, that the whole onus of discerning the Lord's mind had been thrown upon the believer himself. In a sense this is true; but this truth is now supplemented by another. And it is this, That the Son is the object

of the Father's heart, and that consequently the Father delights to communicate His mind to Him. This is also true of the believer in relation to Christ. "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you." And in this very connection He says to His disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what His lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." (John xv. 15.) If therefore the Father found His joy in unfolding His mind to the Son, the Son had likewise His delight in imparting what He received to His own. And this is as true now as it was then; for "when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He will not speak of (or *from*) Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you." (John xvi. 13, 14.) To acquire the knowledge therefore of the Lord's mind for us is not an effort on our parts, but it is the result of being in a position to receive the communications, which He both desires and delights to make to His people.

This leads to another important observation. The Lord Himself was always in a position to hear and understand the Father's communication; but we, alas! are too often either deaf to His voice, or slow to apprehend it when heard. Everything depends therefore upon our state of soul; that is, upon our being in a condition to hear and to receive what the Lord may communicate. Two illustrations of this may be cited from the Scriptures. When the Lord was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He said, "Shall I hide

from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him," &c. (Genesis xviii. 17–19.) This is a striking instance of the truth we have named, and the whole chapter testifies also that the Lord's secrets—secrets of manifestation as well as of instruction—are only confided to those who fear Him—to those who are walking apart from the world in communion with Himself. Lot was left, until the very eve of the visitation of the judgment, in utter ignorance of Sodom's coming doom. It was Abraham, who maintained the walk of faith and the pilgrim character, who was admitted into the intimacies of the Lord's purposes and ways. The second illustration, while teaching the same truth, is of another kind. The Lord was seated with His disciples on the passover night, and while with them "He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me." The disciples were concerned, as they looked one upon another, to know of whom He spake. And it is very noteworthy that Simon Peter, who was seldom lacking in forward energy, does not on this occasion venture to put the question which they all desired to ask. No; he was not near enough to his Lord, and he instinctively felt it, and hence he beckoned to the disciple whom Jesus loved, and who was leaning on Jesus' bosom, to do so for them. This disciple—John, without doubt—immediately responded, and enquires, "Lord, who is it?" And the Spirit of God, as if to call attention to the fact that no other but he could put the question, repeats that this disciple

was "lying on Jesus' breast." From this scene, in addition to the teaching gleaned from the case of Abraham, we learn, not only that the Lord delights to impart His secrets to those who are in a condition to receive them, but also that those who occupy a place of special nearness can ask the Lord to reveal to them His mind—a thing impossible to do if at a distance from Him. It is really this principle which the Lord Himself affirms when He says, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." (John xiv. 21; compare Col. i. 9.)

It will follow therefore that the knowledge of God's mind in any difficulties will never be wanting if, like John, we are living in the habitual enjoyment of the Lord's presence and love, if we know what it is, amid all the confusion and darkness of this evil day, and with the power of Satan present in the midst of the Lord's people, to repose upon that unwearied heart —a heart that remains ever the same, spite of the evil and declension within and around. Absorbed in His love we shall hear His faintest whisper, and His path will be plain before our face. On the other hand, if we are unspiritual or worldly, acting from our own desires or predilections, discernment of the Lord's way, what He is doing, will be impossible. It is quite true that in His tender mercy He may drive us, even when in such a state, by circumstances, control us with the bit and bridle, but that is a far different thing from discerning what "He Himself doeth." In the former case we shall be walking in communion with Himself; in the latter sorrows and chastenings, if not stumblings and

falls, may be His chosen instrumentalities to instruct us in the way we should go.

May we learn ever more fully the meaning of His own words, "If ye abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you!" E. D.

SATISFIED WITH THEE.

Satisfied with Thee, Lord Jesus,
I am blest;
Peace which passeth understanding,
On Thy breast:
No more doubting,
No more trembling,
Oh, what rest!

Occupied with me, Lord Jesus,
In Thy grace;
All Thy ways and thoughts about me,
Only trace
Deeper stories
Of the glories
Of Thy grace.

Taken up with Thee, Lord Jesus,
I would be;
Finding joy and satisfaction,
All in Thee:
Thou the nearest,
And the dearest,
Unto me.

Listening for Thy shout, Lord Jesus,*
In the air;

* It would seem from John v. that the shout is for the dead, and not for the living.—Ed.

When Thy saints shall rise with joy, to
Meet Thee there,
Oh, what gladness!
No more sadness,
Sin, nor care!

Longing for the Bride, Lord Jesus,
Of Thy heart;
To be with Thee in the glory,
Where Thou art.
Love *so* groundless,
Grace *so* boundless,
Wins my heart.

When Thy blood-bought church, Lord Jesus,
Is complete;
When each soul is safely landed
At Thy feet;
What a story,
In the glory
She 'll repeat!

Oh, to praise Thee there, Lord Jesus,
Evermore!
Oh, to grieve and wander from Thee,
Nevermore!
Earth's sad story
Closed in glory,
On yon shore!

Then Thy Church will be, Lord Jesus,
The display
Of Thy richest grace and kindness,
In that day:
Marking pages,
Wondrous stages,
O'er earth's way."

REBEKAH AND ABIGAIL.

WE adore God's grace and condescension in presenting to us what most intimately concerns our interests, as well as His own glory, portion by portion, "here a little, and there a little," so that notwithstanding our lowliness, yea, *in* our lowliness, we may enjoy communion with Him. "We know in part." The lamb in Egypt, the Red Sea, and the Jordan, combinedly illustrate in type His blessed salvation. The shepherd, the diligent woman, and the father of Luke xv., give us the seal of the Godhead, that this salvation should be the portion of the lost, and His joy when it becomes so. The sacrifices also unfold to us even now the manifold glories of the cross of the Son of God. No one thing could serve as a perfect illustration of the truth, and no one person could manifest it, however devoted to God, save the One in whom all foreshadowings blend, and on whom the most attenuated rays of divine light converge, even Jesus, who is the Truth. Whatever of true zeal, love, devotedness to God, or glory according to God, is manifest in man down here, it is but the feeble reflection of what is in Him. Wherever there has been acquiescence in God's evident arrangements, it but pointed forward to Him who lived "by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God." We have two beautiful examples of such acquiescence in the subjects of this paper—Rebekah's acceptance of God's arrangements for Abraham's son through his aged servant, as well as Abigail's determined acknowledg-

ment of David's royalty, then seen only by faith. This enhances the circumstances recorded in Gen. xxiv. and 1 Sam. xxv., and throws a beam of divine light upon both cases, enabling us to perceive in each a precious type of the Church.

It is our joy to own that when God would form a Bride for His Son, His love to *Him* is the pledge that she will worthily occupy the marvellous position to which she is called. We read of her "*prepared* as a bride, *adorned* for her husband," as "having the glory of God;" and we are instructed that "He who hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God." (2 Cor. v.) Even now "the body" on earth reflects the glory of the Head above. He says, "I am glorified in them." (Compare 1 John iv. 17.) When therefore we consider an Isaac, or a David, typically, not only do we read in a Rebekah or an Abigail his natural complement, even as the Church is "the fulness of Christ" (Eph. i. 23); but we may justly expect to find something premonitory of the grace of Christ in themselves also, which we have seen to be the case. This makes a study of our subjects directly profitable to our souls. In a consideration of the moral features displayed in Rebekah's history we find those doubtless which link her case with Abigail's; but the former presents more the ardent zeal manifested at the opening of the wilderness journey; the latter, the intelligent apprehension of the supreme worth of the bride's object, gained amid the vicissitudes of the journey, in immediate view of the close.

Abraham will not seek a wife for his son among the nations around him, upon whom the judgment of God rested because of their iniquity (Gen. xv. 16–21), and whose destruction would be concurrent with the estab-

lishment of his seed in the glory which God had promised. God moreover had called him into a pilgrimship, away from country, kindred, and father's house, which, as *he* realized the call, extended to "his household after him." When therefore Abraham's servant suggested the compromise, by which Isaac's true place on earth would be ignored, to meet the contingency of the woman's hesitation or dislike, to leave country, kindred, and father's house, and to become a pilgrim with him, the servant receives reiterated caution that Isaac's place on earth should be maintained at all cost. The standard should not be lowered *under any circumstances.* How many adopt the suggestion just referred to, and lower the gospel standard, to make grace palatable to those who naturally shrink from the claims of such glory as God offers, involving identification with the lowly Jesus in the scene of His rejection! How few work from the apostolic point of view, in which Christ's glory is supreme, and the gospel the means of gathering "from among the nations a people for His name!" (Acts xv. 14.)

The servant goes forth, the bearer of glad tidings, and proves the truth of the scripture: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." He "rolls his way upon the Lord, and He brings it to pass." (Psalm xxxvii. 5, marg.) Forth comes Rebekah *before he had done speaking,* who brings him to her father's house. He *will not eat* until he has told his errand, in which the glories of the heir, his separate place in the scene of his pilgrimage, and the uncompromising character of that pilgrimage, are set forth. He dwells upon the tokens by which the Lord God authenticated His servant Abraham's messenger.

This being accepted, Rebekah receives from the

messenger's treasures (Matt. xiii. 52), tokens of Isaac's glory—a foretaste of what she is called to share. Her relations also profit through the overflowing abundance of the source which is henceforth to be at her command. It is worthy of notice that as yet she knows nothing of Isaac *himself*. She has not even heard his name. The parents see the advantage offered, but though appealed to, on the ground of God's hand being so manifest in the whole matter, to let Rebekah go at once away, they hesitate, saying, "Let the damsel abide with us * a few days" (a full year, marg.). She however, like Paul in other days, "immediately, conferring not with flesh and blood," says, "I will go." She yields herself implicitly to that in which God's hand is so plainly seen, and enters upon the vicissitudes of a dreary journey, leaving country, kindred, and father's house for a land and circumstances yet unknown, except through belief in the message. Arrived at Gerah, though she has met Isaac, and learned *his name* from himself, she has not reached the termination of her pilgrimage. It now assumes a new and characteristic phase, in which Rebekah learns how much is still to be endured in fellowship with Isaac, and how much he is to her in the midst of it all. Thus we have typified in her the commencement of the Church's wilderness journey, the start for and with Christ of a new-born soul. Such zeal! Everything laid aside and counted dead weight in the ardour of first love. It was so with early Christians. They "took joyfully the spoiling of their

* Thus it ever is with "flesh and blood." (Gal. i. 16.) Abraham could leave country and kindred; but not until his *father's death* set him free from the influences of flesh and blood, did he leave his "father's house" at Charran.

goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and an enduring substance."

"All *for Him* content to leave."

Turning now to 1 Sam. xxv., Rebekah's pilgrimage passed on to her children in a manner too truly sorrowful, and they had not as yet entered into rest, God saying in David, "To-day . . . for if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day." But in David, a man after His own heart, God offers rest to His people. Abigail owns David as God's anointed, whose soul should be "bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord God," realizes what God was offering to Israel, if they would hear his voice, and thus morally reaches the end of the journey upon which Rebekah entered. Historically, we know, Israel did not then attain to God's rest. The rest remains, and will be secured through mercy to Israel in the blessed antetype. Meantime God's king is in rejection. Dark times have fallen upon David since the women of Israel sang, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Hunted as a partridge on the mountains, with but few followers, those whom distress, poverty, and bitterness of soul (xxii. 2, marg.) had gathered around him, God takes occasion by these circumstances to test Israel, and to gather out a company, who should receive a distinguished place in the coming glory with their leader, and amongst these we find Abigail. Wherever faith exists, the trials which test it but manifest its character to the glory of God. (Compare Deut. xxxiii. 8, 9.) Abigail's faith is equal to the test. Nabal, though her husband, fails altogether. His heart is set upon present advantage, and this blinds him alike to David's

glory, and Saul's already twice-revealed rejection. (xiii. 14; xv. 23–31.) To him accordingly Saul, who heads *his* line of things, is supreme, and David perhaps a servant broken away from his master! David's place tests everything, as indeed one might expect in so striking a type of the Blessed One whom Simeon (Luke ii.) speaks of as a "sign that shall be *spoken against*, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed," the sword piercing through even Mary's own soul, according to Heb. iv. 12, 13. Not alone is faith manifested; it is measured also in all who come in contact with the rejected David — God's standard. Hence we find, intermediate, as it were, between the Nabals and the Abigails, the Jonathans, who, though loving David as their own soul, fall short of the mark. David had wrought a great deliverance in Israel, in which God's hand was evident, and Jonathan so appreciates it that he strips himself to do David honour, brings Saul's wrath upon himself by shielding David according to the dictates of the love which bound them together, holds sweet counsel with him in the wood (xxiii. 16), but returns from that friendly conference to Saul's house, and David to the hold in the wilderness! Why? The answer is unmistakable. "I know," he says, "that thou shalt be king over Israel," but adds, "And *I shall be next unto thee*." Here is Jonathan's weak point—*self* is there. To argue his humility from the circumstances would doubtless be easy; but the *character* of the humility is what is now in question; for God's king is in rejection. Love he certainly had, but not that which bid him to count all things but rubbish for the object of God's choice; faith too, but not that which closed his eye upon the things that were seen and tem-

poral. There was just enough self-love left to make him seek a *place* by-and-by, just enough of it to make him value the same now. He went back and died in company with Saul on mount Gilboa, losing both the future and the present! "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." (Luke ix. 24.) "O Jonathan, thou wast slain *in thine high places!*"

It is interesting to observe that in the poor, crippled Mephibosheth we discover the moral condition one would have looked for in the devoted Jonathan. Before the king he is but a "dead dog" confessed; and when David returns to Jerusalem upon the death of Absalom, he can say concerning the scheming Ziba, in respect of what might have been gain to him, "*Let him take all,* since my lord, the king, has returned again in peace." Utterly devoid of self, his heart is a vacuum which nought but David can fill. But what it has cost the son of Jonathan to be brought to this—shorn of his patrimony, an exile, and helplessly crippled!

Abigail attained morally the level upon which Mephibosheth stood before David, but surpassed him even in this, that David was not then in power; he was still in rejection, yet her faith and devotedness shine out brilliantly in a day of persistent darkness for the object of her esteem. Abigail ministers to David; but more, she saw the divinely imparted dignity which rested upon him amid the sorrows of his outcast place, and meets him becomingly. To her Saul is but "a man" (*v.* 29), and so zealous is she for the reputation of David that she pleads with him on *this* ground in behalf of her unworthy husband, identifying herself with his iniquity; and she merely begs to be remembered of David "when he

cometh into his kingdom." This a crucified thief could do acceptably, and the becoming nature of his request from a despised and rejected Lord, manifests by contrast the ill savour of that which earned for James and John His just rebuke, and in which they morally stood alongside Jonathan. How different is the tenor of Psalm cxxxi.! David received Abigail's offering, hearkened to her voice, and accepted her person (*v.* 35); and when, in the Lord's judgment, ten days subsequently, Nabal dies, David sent and communed with Abigail to take her to be his wife. She bows herself to the earth before his messengers, and utters the most perfect expression of a truly humble heart—"Let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord." (Compare John xiii. 5, 14.) She took Ham's place (see Gal. iii. 13), a consciously unworthy, self-emptied thing, in more than mere words too; for she manifests her unfeigned humility by submitting unhesitatingly to the word of David; "she hasted . . . and went after the messengers of David, and became his wife."

Jezreel yielded David a second wife, according to verse 43, which evidently typifies the connection of Israel (the Jezreel or "seed of God," sown to Him on the earth, Hosea ii. 19–23) with Christ in a future day; also "betrothed" to Him "for ever . . . in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies . . . even in faithfulness." *She* shall be brought unto *the king* in a raiment of needlework, wonderfully wrought doubtless, just as she, typified by Abigail, will be presented to *the Lamb* (Rev. xix. 7, 8) in a raiment suited to His eye. "To *her was granted* that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white . . . the righteousness of saints." As the world will see her, it will

be purely as an object of grace, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband . . . having *the glory of God.*" But the blessed Lamb of God will delight to present *unto Himself* His Church, clad in a robe which bespeaks his own zealous and gracious care for her as she passes along through a defiling scene. He "loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it *with the washing of water by the word, that He might* present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." How zealous we might be in this also, were our eye filled with the scene which terminates our present course—the marriage of the Lamb! Clad in righteousness then, and in view of that, walking as He walked now, aiming at present likeness to Him, knowing that we shall be like Him when He shall appear. What need hinder us adding, as it were, to the beauties of the bridal robe now, seeing that we find such a precious grouping of righteousnesses in Abigail—unfeigned humility, ready obedience, zeal for her lord's reputation, becoming service rendered him, thorough contempt for Saul's line of things, worthy prudence, and readiness to attribute to herself the shortcomings of others? J. K.

ON MINISTERING CHRIST.

THE Scriptures testify of Christ. Our Lord said, "They are they which testify of me." Whatever else they may set forth, it is clear that the great subject of God's revelation to man is Christ Jesus the Lord. In various ways, by many instruments, at different times, and under manifold circumstances, the divine glory of

His person, His perfect manhood, His moral excellencies, His infinite perfections, His finished work, His fulness, and His offices are blessedly presented to us in the Scriptures of eternal truth.

In our Lord's personal ministry, wherever He was, He declared the Father, and so perfectly showed in His ways and words the characteristics of Him who sent Him, that He could truly say at the close, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father;" and His dealings with those around manifested that He was "full of grace and truth." Instead of casting out any sinner who came to Him, He opened wide His arms, and said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He plainly declared that He was the only Saviour of sinners, and the Refuge and resource for His own loved disciples.

While constantly insisting on the divine authenticity of Scripture, and declaring that "the Scripture cannot be broken," He was Himself the living expression of it. The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. In the sacred writings, as the fitting occasions came, He was presented as the woman's Seed that should bruise the serpent's head, the Seed of Abraham; and yet He could most truly say, "Before Abraham was I am;" the virgin's Child, and yet Emmanuel; the Son given, and yet the perfect Man. Scripture spake of Him as David's son, and yet being David's Lord; the offspring of David, and yet the root; Son of man, yet Son of God. There we read of Him as the Prophet that was to be raised up, the Priest after Melchisedec's order, and the King who shall yet sit on the throne of His father David, and reign over the house of Jacob for ever, of whose kingdom there shall be no end. Songs of triumph

and of joy referred to Him; prophets testified by the Spirit of His sufferings, and the glories which should follow; and we know that "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Scripture also teaches us that in the man Christ Jesus eternal life has been manifested, divine love has been manifested, and God has been manifested. By Him God's ways have been vindicated, His counsels and purposes have been and will be carried out, His word fulfilled, His truth established, His righteousness perfectly met, the holy demands of His throne fully answered. There we behold Jesus, when in the path of deepest suffering, even when forsaken of God, glorifying Him with perfect obedience, perfect love and perfect faith. There on the cross was the entire surrender of Himself, and a complete answer to every claim of divine justice on account of our sins. All was divinely perfect, so that at the end of the solitary way He could say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

Again, when in company with the evangelists who were inspired to mark out for our comfort the footprints of His blessed path, He is sometimes brought before us as compassionately satisfying hungry thousands with a few loaves and fishes, with abundance of broken food left; and yet He deigned to accept the ministry to Himself of certain women of their substance. We look with wonder at Him at one moment, as the One who carried our griefs, weeping with the sorrowful and bereaved; and at another, raising the dead as "the resurrection and the life." Again we see Him weary and asleep on a pillow in the hinder part of the ship, and when awakened by His distressed dis-

ciples, commanding the stormy wind to cease, and the raging waves to be still. Yea, in every page of the inspired narrative enough is recorded to fill our worshipping hearts with wonder, love, and praise.

Again and again the written Word speaks of this spotless One, who was "separate from sinners," as having once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God; who came into the world to save sinners, and died for our sins according to the Scriptures. In life we see Him resisting Satan, overcoming him in every temptation, casting out devils with His omnipotent word, and through death destroying him that had the power of death. Mighty Conqueror! In His life the repeated testimony from heaven was, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And God's righteous estimate of His death was, that it entitled Him to the highest glory and honour; while the rent veil, the raising Him up from among the dead for our justification, and the gift to us of the Holy Ghost, most unquestionably show God's entire satisfaction with His atoning work on the cross for us. If we look at Jesus in His life, there is everything to win our hearts; and in His death, there is everything to meet our consciences. The perfection and glory of Himself fills our souls with joy; the value of His finished work gives us rest and peace. It is to Him, as Son of man, all judgment is committed, and to His name every knee must bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord; for He will yet, according to the working of His mighty power, subdue all things unto Himself.

Thus, whether we look at the typical days of olden times, at the many shadowy illustrations of a former dispensation, or at the Lord's own ways and ministry

in the days of His flesh—whether we view Him in His life or in His death, it is Himself of whom the Scriptures testify, it is Himself who engages our hearts, it is Himself that is ministered to our souls; and though some parts of Scripture appear to the natural man to be only dry records of history, or details of long-forgotten ordinances, they are often found to the soul under divine teaching to be rich in comforting or in instructive ministrations of Christ to the heart.

If in life our Lord emphatically endorsed the writings of Moses as concerning Himself, if He quoted the Psalms of David as the Holy Ghost's testimony of Himself, and referred to the prophets as also having reference to Himself, the same was equally characteristic of His ministry to His disciples after He rose from the dead. He assured some that their mistake and folly arose from not believing all that the prophets had spoken, and He showed them that He Himself was the great subject of Old Testament revelation and ministry; for "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them *in all the Scriptures* the things concerning Himself." On another occasion He also said unto His disciples, "that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me." (Luke xxiv.) Thus He not only authenticates the Old Testament writings as a whole, but assures us that their ministry is concerning Himself.

And after our Lord had ascended, and the Holy Ghost had come down at Pentecost, and formed the Church—the body of Christ—though there was greater power with the Word, the ministry had the same characteristics—

the divine authority of Scripture, and their testimony concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. The books of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets were quoted by the apostles as a divine revelation and a divine ministration of Christ, so that those who heard their preaching, or read their writings, must have known that it was not merely something about Christ, but the ministry of Christ Himself to the heart by a power which brings home the blessedness of Christ, that takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. To their hearers they set forth His person, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification; they spake of the gift of the Holy Ghost, His Godhead, personality, indwelling, and operations as the glorifier of Christ, as well as the abundant love of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; while our Lord's coming again, His kingdom and reign, were constantly proclaimed. It was Christ they so presented to those to whom they ministered, that we are told that "they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ." If Peter's line of things was the kingdom and Paul's the Church, they both enforced the divine authority of the word of God over the heart and conscience; and both set forth Christ. If Peter in his early sermons quoted from Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets, we find Paul reasoning "out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus," he says, "whom I preach unto you is Christ." He quotes from the Psalms when preaching at Antioch; and again we are told that he persuaded others "out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening." (Acts xvii. 3; xxviii. 23.)

It is scarcely necessary to refer to the epistles to trace how often the books of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets are cited by the apostles in their inspired writings, and that too as positively ministering Christ to souls. Even a careless observer of these writings could scarcely fail to see that the great subject they present, whether occupied with the past, present, or future, is the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only is He to be seen as the light and glory of every page, but He is the all-attractive, all-sufficient Object set before us to meet us in every state, and to satisfy every need of our souls. Whether Peter, Paul, John, James, or Jude be the instrument, it is the blessed Lord of whom they write.

Nor is Christ less prominently set forth in the Apocalypse; for not only is the Lamb, and the value of His precious blood, often made to pass before our spiritual vision; but Christ as Son of man is seen judging the assemblies, and presented to each assembly according to its state, circumstances, and need. Though the book be a revelation for the most part of what had not been known before, yet the golden threads are so interwoven with the testimony of Moses and the prophets that the spiritual eye fails not to perceive that the many books of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, form a marvellous whole, which, though written by many instruments, must have emanated from an Omniscient and Almighty mind. How truly then do the Scriptures testify of Christ, and tell us that which is concerning Himself! and how clearly too it is manifest that the Holy Ghost, who moved men to write them, has therein been the glorifier and testifier of Christ! H. H. S.

(To be continued, D.V.)

"WHERE I AM."

"TELL me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." (Song of Solomon i. 7, 8.)

The language of the earthly bride in this passage is free from all obscurity. She has Himself, the object of her heart's delight, and she converses with Him. But because He is known to her, and is the joy and delight of her heart, the One whom her soul loveth, she covets to learn what she can only learn from Himself, the place of His habitual resort; for there would she abide with Him. This is fitting and beautiful; for it is the quality of true affection to seek out the environment of its object, the scene in which it moves, and responsive love delights to answer to so clear an evidence of the affection it has inspired. Hence we find the two disciples, who had been attracted to the person of the Lord by the overflowing appreciation of Him by the Baptist, when he exclaimed "Behold the Lamb of God," being asked by the Lord "What seek ye?" with unaffected simplicity made answer, "Master, where abidest thou?" the beauty of which is only excelled by His equally simple reply, "Come and see. They came then and saw where He abode, and they abode with Him that day." Surely it was the quintessence of the Christianity that should be according to God; the divine drama re-

hearsed. For there is (1) Himself, known in His sacrificial character as God's Lamb; (2) He is followed; and (3) dwelt with where He dwells. His work, His person, and His place all ours. If I have, through grace, a valid claim to one, I have equally so to all. The title and the estate go together. The more then I value Himself, the more I seek to be where He is; and if that be in its full character denied me for a time, yet I cannot be denied an interest in the scene where He abides, nor be prevented in spirit abiding with Him; for I have an undeniable title, in the plenitude of His grace, to His own portion for ever.

It would be easy to trace this principle through Scripture. The innocent man had his Eden; lawless man, a cursed earth. The typically redeemed nation, a land flowing with milk and with honey; the really redeemed of Old Testament times had heaven. And the Church has the prepared place in the Father's house, in a word, "Where I am." The Lord not only taught this to His beloved disciples in distinct terms, but He fortified and comforted their hearts with it, in view of His being about to leave them. "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and *where I am*, there shall also my servant be." Again, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that *where I am*, there ye may be also." And finally, in that wonderful John xvii., "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me *where I am;* that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." The deep significance of

this is most precious, and for us is full of joy. As He said, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father." We have not to wait for Him to take His place; He fills that place already. "Being by the right hand of God exalted," as the glorified Man in the presence of God, He but waits now the word of the Father to come forth and fetch His beloved saints to where He Himself is. The greater result of His divine work is already wrought—this taking His place as man in the scene which His own presence fills and illuminates. The lesser result only is what remains—the bringing us there also, which is but the complement of that glorious act of divinely surpassing power which the God of our Lord Jesus Christ wrought "when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Eph. i. 20, 21.)

The very fact that He as Son of man has passed through death and resurrection, and now occupies a place in the Father's house as our "forerunner," assures that place to us, according to the counsel of His will who has predestinated that He and we shall be glorified together. The deep significance of this is most precious, being full association with Himself in His own acquired place, both now and eternally.

Nor are we left till the day of glory for an apprehension of what such blessedness will be. Its present enjoyment in character and quality, though by no means in its adequate degree, is assured to us in the words, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Accord-

ingly we have when so gathered the "where I am" made good to us even now, in a way incomparably blessed for saints while on earth. This side the glory no scene can rival the blessedness to us, and the unique joy to Him, of the gathering together of Himself and His saints; and at such a time the Spirit of God loves to conduct our hearts right onward to that still fairer scene, and that still happier occasion, when we shall walk with Him in white, and when the "where I am" shall be peopled with His blood-washed ones, His companions in unfading glory, Himself in their midst in His many-phased beauty and supremacy, the centre and the spring of their exceeding joy for ever.

May our hearts, under His exquisite touch, be moved by the Spirit of God to cherish and to cultivate a joyous and hallowing anticipation of the approaching blessedness of His unclouded presence, which is "fulness of joy." W. R.

THE consequence of Christ's priesthood is that He makes us priests. He has entered in once into the holy place. That relates to Himself; and He makes us children with the Father and priests to God. He has, of course, the preëminence. The moment the least thought of a priesthood comes in between us and God, the truth of Christianity is gone. There is only now the priesthood of all believers. We are priests by virtue of the competency to enter the holiest of all. There is as much liberty for us to enter into the holiest as Christ Himself. To deny the priesthood of all believers is to say that all saints cannot enter into the holiest by virtue of that blood.

"EMPTY" VESSELS.

A GOOD deal has been said and written, especially in poetry, about the need of our being empty vessels, ready for the use of the Master. The thought is, that our being kept empty is the qualification for immediate use, that when in that condition the Lord can take us up, fill us, and send us forth on any service to which He calls. Is this a scriptural thought?

We will consider, first of all, the scriptures in which the term vessels or vessel is found. In 2 Cor. iv. the apostle says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." (*v.* 7.) There is little doubt that this passage contains an allusion to Gideon and his men. We read that "he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers." (Judges vii. 16.) The pitchers had been empty, it will be observed, but Gideon put the lights—the brands or torches—inside. This will help us to understand the meaning of the treasure in the earthen vessels of which St. Paul speaks. It is evidently, from the context, the knowledge of the glory of God, that glory which, displayed in the face of the glorified Christ, God had caused to shine in our hearts. But this once received, by the operation of sovereign power and grace (for it was the God who had commanded the light to shine out of darkness who hath shined in our hearts), does not come and go, but remains as an abiding possession. The condition of its display is another thing, involving the constantly bearing about

in the body the dying of Jesus (*v.* 10); but the treasure remains in the vessel.

In 2 Timothy ii. the term vessels is also found. "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work." (*vv.* 20, 21.) The question here, as will be readily seen, is not of empty or full vessels, but entirely one of association. To be a vessel ready to the Master's hand, "a man" must be in separation from the vessels of dishonour, thus affirming the principle of defilement through our associations and consequent disqualification for service. Only as purged from the vessels of dishonour can one become a vessel unto honour, one which the Master will delight to take up and employ. But passing on to the next chapter, we learn that if the man of God is to be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works, he must be well instructed from the Scriptures. (See *vv.* 14–17.) With this agrees the exhortation in Colossians—"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another," &c. In other words, the vessel must be filled, and not there and then for the immediate service, but it must be in that state habitually; the word must *dwell* in the vessel, and then it will flow out in teaching as the Master may require.

If we now refer to the truth involved more generally, the same result will be obtained. When our Lord was speaking to the woman of Samaria, He said, "Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be

in him a well" (fountain) "of water springing up into everlasting life." (John iv. 14.) Here again the water once received—a symbol doubtless of life in the power of the Holy Ghost—remains as a permanent possession. Hence if we turn to John vii. we discover that the water is not only received, but that it also flows out: "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (*v.* 38.) The vessel is thus filled, and filled in the first place for its own eternal satisfaction, and then it overflows in blessing to others. It is freely conceded that there must be the constant reception, but even so the vessel is never to be empty. Nay, the well or fountain is within, because it is connected with the gift of the indwelling Spirit; for John expressly says, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive." (*v.* 39.) Possessing therefore the Holy Ghost, the normal state of the believer is to be filled even to overflowing with His power—power of life—so that "rivers of living water" might flow out for the refreshment and blessing of those around. There could not, in this view of the case, be an empty vessel, and it is equally clear that to be prepared for service is to be full to overflowing. Even more might be said. Living in the power of the Holy Ghost, as so possessed, these streams of living water would ever be flowing forth as from a perennial fountain. On the other hand, if these streams should, through the grieving of the Holy Spirit of God, not be flowing out, and the vessel in a sense become empty, such an one would not, it is needless to say, be in a condition for the Master's use.

If we now refer to another class of scriptures the same conclusion will be reached. Two will suffice.

"Let your loins be girded about, *and your lights burning*," &c. (Luke xii. 35.) "Among whom ye shine as lights in the world." (Phil. ii. 15.) Now the "lights" in these and other scriptures always signify Christ—Christ as shining out, in the power of the Holy Ghost, through the life of the believer. When in this scene Christ was the light of the world; and, in His absence, believers occupy this same place; but they only answer to it in so far as Christ is practically expressed in their walk and ways. There is therefore a correspondency between these scriptures and that already considered, which tells us that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." For Christ must be possessed before He can be expressed; the light must be within before it can shine forth in the midst of the darkness by which we are surrounded. An empty vessel would thus be one without Christ, and it is not the way of our Lord to take up such, and kindle the light, and send him forth to shine in special missions of service. No; the more the vessel is filled with Christ—and the condition of being filled is to be constantly occupied with beholding the glory that radiates from His unveiled face at the right hand of God—the brighter will be the illumination that will stream forth, and the more distinctly will it be ready to the Master's hand for disposal at His will. It was the foolish virgins, and not the wise, who had the empty vessels; they had no oil in them, significant of the fact that they were not born again, and consequently had not the indwelling Spirit. The wise had failed in not trimming their lamps; but inasmuch as their vessels were not empty they were aroused in time to meet the Bridegroom, and went by His grace in with Him to the marriage. The others—

the foolish virgins with the empty vessels—were shut out for ever.

The question may then be put, Is it possible for the Christian to be an empty vessel? One of two things will always follow. Either he will be filled with Christ, or with himself and the things which centre in himself. Thus, if not filled with Christ, he is always in danger. It was so with the Jewish nation. The unclean spirit of idolatry had gone out, but finding no rest, in the language of our blessed Lord, the unclean spirit saith, "I will return to my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." (Matt. xii. 43–45.) If now that nation had received Christ, He would have filled up the void, and they would have been secure from this awful intrusion of wicked spirits. In like manner, unless the believer is filled with Christ, he is ever exposed to be occupied and possessed with what is opposed to Christ. An empty vessel he should not, and indeed cannot, be.

It is quite true that, if the Lord sends any of His own on special service, everything—power, wisdom, grace, and the message, if this be the kind of service—must all be received from Him. Nothing of our own, nothing that springs from self, can be used for Him. But the point is, that the believer will not be in a condition to be employed unless he is already filled. And the more filled he is, the more Christ practically possesses his soul, the more consciously dependent he will be, and the more certain therefore, when the privilege of any service is conferred, to look up to receive

all he needs for it from the Lord. So in the primitive church, it was when they were all filled with the Holy Ghost that they spake the word of God with boldness. (See Acts iv. 31; also ii. 4, &c.) It is therefore, we again repeat, not empty, but filled vessels, that the Lord requires for His sovereign disposal in service.

E. D.

NEHEMIAH AND JUDE.

THERE is one striking correspondency between the book of Nehemiah and the epistle of Jude. In the former we read, that "every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held a weapon. For the builders, every one, had his sword girded by his side, and so builded." In the latter, Jude, at the commencement of his epistle, exhorts us "earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints;" and, at the end, "to build up ourselves on our most holy faith." He would have us, in a word, like Nehemiah's builders, with the sword in one hand, and the trowel in the other. The reason is found in the character of the times. Certain men had crept in unawares, and apostates abounded. It was no time for peace, therefore, when the foundations were being assailed. In the face of such dangers God would have His people valiant for the truth. The sword, it should be observed, is rather for defence than for attack; but conflict must not be shrunk from when the faith once delivered to the saints is in question. But while prepared for, and even in the midst of, conflict, we must also be diligently occupied with the edification of ourselves, and of one another, that we may be the better prepared to resist the attacks of the enemy. * *

THE NEED OF HOLINESS.

In Genesis iii. we see that it was by the Fall that man *got* a conscience, and the first effect of the acting of that conscience was to make him seek to cover the nakedness of which his disobedience had given him the knowledge, and then, as soon as he heard the voice of God, to seek to hide himself from His presence. This was the necessary consequence of the knowledge of evil, mingled with the feeling that he had committed this evil, and that consequently he was unfit to appear before a God, who could not be other than a Judge who must needs condemn the sinner.

Conscience tells us this, and makes us feel it; but human intelligence, blinded by Satan, seeks to excuse the evil, and to account for everything by setting God entirely aside. In principle this is morally, in fact, only the repetition of what our first parents did—it is seeking to cover oneself, and hide from God. All these efforts result in weakening the thought of holiness in the soul. Man, when he is only led by his reason, is irrational, and gets further and further from the truth. He is in darkness; but being also blind, he cannot discern between light and darkness. Therefore it is written, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." (Ps. x. 4.) And in this respect the philosopher is no better than others. (Rom. ii. 1–11.) If the foundation of his reasonings be false, how can the building which he rears upon it abide? Hence the truth of this oft-

repeated statement, that there is no morality apart from revelation. Let those who deny God tell us, if they can, what the moral principles are which they pretend to possess, apart from that which God has revealed to us in the Scriptures.

But the word of God does not simply offer us a moral code; that is to say, a system of principles of action so framed that men may be able to live together in peace, and that society should be upheld and kept together. It also shows that the only source of true happiness for man is in that very presence from which he flees, and which he ever tries to avoid. God has not desired to be only the *Judge* of the sinner. In His grace He comes to seek man; albeit, on the principle of righteousness, He reveals Himself as a *just* God and a SAVIOUR. By drawing to Himself, in grace and in peace, His fallen creature, that sin had set at a distance, God manifests His glory even there where the enemy has triumphed. But God cannot thus bring a sinful creature into His blessed presence without giving him the perception and the consciousness of divine holiness; for it is evident that God cannot change His character, nor lower the standard of His holiness, in order to bring man into relationship with Himself. Morality may suffice between man and man, but there must be *holiness* for relationship with God. Scripture insists on this throughout.

But this great lesson of holiness supposes another, without which it could not be learnt by a sinner at a distance from God. We refer to the revelation of the grace and faithfulness of God. I must know God as a Saviour-God before my soul can be in a condition to understand what His holiness requires; therefore the

first lines of Scripture declare His infinite goodness, thus preparing the way for the equally important revelation of His holiness. God is Love, and God is Light. The cross of Christ is the explanation of these two great truths, and is also their highest expression, while at the same time they reach on side by side to the resurrection of Christ (particularly so as regards holiness); for He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from among the dead." (Rom. i. 4.)

In connection with what we have said, we see that the first book of the Bible—Genesis—displays different phases of the faithful goodness of God, His purposes of grace towards man; but ever, of course, on the ground of holiness,* yet so presented as to attract the heart of him who knows not God, and to produce confidence in one whom sin has rendered distrustful of God. The two following books, on the contrary, are especially occupied with holiness. Exodus lays the groundwork, and Leviticus, with a few chapters in Numbers, developes the details in connection with the national and priestly order of the children of Israel.

With one exception, and that is in reference to the institution of the Sabbath (chap. ii. 3), the word "holiness," or to "hallow," does not occur in Genesis. In truth this book does not treat of redemption nor of the habitation of God amongst men. God comes forth to seek man, He calls him, and keeps him in faithful grace; He justifies him, and accomplishes all His purposes towards him; He produces faith in his soul, nourishes it, and tests it, and thereby makes His servants to walk

* The history of the Deluge shows most clearly what God thinks of man, and manifests that He neither can nor will tolerate sin.

in communion with Him. Such are some of the precious truths as to the ways of God which are to be found in this first book, and which are characteristic of it; but it is nowhere intimated that God's thought is to come down and dwell among men. The first twenty-two verses of Heb. xi. give a review of the teachings of this book as regards faith. In Genesis there are two great divisions. The first closes with chapter xi., and developes the great principles of the government of God; the second, which begins with the history of Abraham, speaks of God's call and His sovereign grace towards His elected ones. Holy men of God were maintained in communion with Him, their faith was fed by the communications He made to them. And they, confessing that they were "strangers and pilgrims" on the earth, sought a "better country," a "heavenly city," so that God was not ashamed of being called "their God." (Heb. xi. 16.) Even in the first part of the book we find one of these, Enoch, who received witness during his lifetime that he walked with God, and he was not found; for God had translated him.

Exodus enters upon the great subject of redemption. God will have a people for *Himself* that He may dwell amongst them; consequently this nation must be *holy*, for God is holy. (See Exod. xix. 4–6; xxix. 43–46.) Hence the state in which God's grace formed this people is given in detail, as well as their moral condition, and the attitude of their heart toward God. Their deliverance from Egypt, and the power of Pharaoh, occupies a large portion of the book, and this prepares the way morally for the establishment of the *sanctuary* in which God deigned to dwell in their

midst, and of which we have the first mention in chap. xv. 17. (See also chap. xxv. 8.)

Moses was the chosen vessel raised and prepared by God for the deliverance of His people Israel. To him God revealed the only ground on which He could bring man into relationship with Himself—that of absolute holiness. He showed it to him before He sent him to the Israelites. The flame of fire out of the midst of the bush in the wilderness was the suited figure for enabling Moses to grasp the great lesson God had to teach him, and to cause the words which were said to him to sink deep into his soul: "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." (Exod. iii. 5.) The God who was here revealing Himself to Moses was the same who had led the fathers in His perfect grace, and could therefore say to him, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob;" so that his affections might be drawn to God by the remembrance of His goodness to the patriarchs. Thus was Moses prepared for the reception of all the teaching expressed in the burning bush. We also see through the whole of his subsequent history how deeply this lesson was engraven on his heart, and how it formed the basis of all his relations with God. (Comp. Exod. xxxiii.; Deut. iv. 24; ix. 3, &c.) God said to him, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people . . . and *I am come down* to deliver them." This involved the near relationship of the people with God, a relationship which could only exist on the ground of HOLINESS. God is LOVE, and HE IS LIGHT.

W. J. L.

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

(*Continued from page 28.*)

DWELLING on the former of these subjects, Paul reminds them of what they had been morally; viz., dead in offences and sins, walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience. That was the condition of the Gentile; and the Jew was really no better, though he had the knowledge of God. Dead in offences he too was, and had his conversation among the sons of disobedience in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and was by nature a child of wrath even as the rest. All these found on one common platform, as dead in offences and active in evil, God, rich in mercy, had quickened with Christ, had raised them up together (believers from Jews and from Gentiles), and made them both to sit in the heavenlies in Christ. How closely are believers here connected with Christ! If the Holy Ghost dwells on the exaltation of Christ, it is to tell us how God has put us in Him in the heavenlies, bringing out the motive which thus actuated Him—His great love wherewith He loved us—and the purpose of it, to show in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Saved then by grace through faith, and all this of God, not of works, lest any man should boast, we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared, that we should

walk in them. Thus we learn of the depth of ruin in which we were, and of the height to which we have been raised in grace. Dead in sins, needing too a nature in which we could serve God, we are saved, and created in Christ Jesus unto good works, and are in Him now in the heavenlies, waiting for that hour to arrive when we shall be in person with Him there for ever.

But divine grace has worked for those once Gentiles in another way. Dispensational distance characterised them; for God had made a difference between His earthly people and all others. What a Gentile's position was dispensationally we read in ii. 11–12. How that has been changed the apostle goes on to point out: "Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." In His death, as making atonement for sins, those once Jews have a common interest with those once Gentiles. In His death, by which the middle wall of partition has been broken down, which separated dispensationally, by God's appointment, the Jews from the Gentiles, we have a special interest. Once far off, we are made nigh by His blood, and through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Hence all special privileges of the one class over the other are annulled, not by reducing the Jew to the level dispensationally of the Gentile; nor by raising the Gentile to the privileged platform on which the Jew had been put; but by forming in Christ of twain one new man, and by reconciling both unto God in one body through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. Wherefore, as citizens of God's kingdom, as forming part of God's household, and as built on the foundation of the apostles and pro-

phets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone, those once Gentiles are brought nigh in Christ to God, to be stones in that temple, at present building, in which He will dwell for ever, and are now builded together for God's habitation on earth in the Spirit. Such are God's displays of grace, in which we share who believe on His Son.

The necessary consequence of the unfolding of all this grace has to be pressed on the recipients of it. But before doing that, the apostle, in a parenthetic way, as it has been pointed out, dwells more at length on the mystery, or secret, kept close from every intelligent creature until revealed to him. "For this cause," he writes, "I Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus for you the Gentiles"—a most touching appeal to them and to us. For the Lord Jesus Christ, as he elsewhere writes (Phil. iii. 7, 8), he suffered the loss of all things. For the Gentiles, as he here reminds them, he was a prisoner at that time. Evidently Paul thought the special grace in which they shared was of great value, and to maintain the truth in connection with it he was willing to endure imprisonment and bonds. Could any one who had been a Gentile have visited Paul in his prison at Rome, and have come away satisfied for himself simply to know Christ as his Saviour, without valuing the privileges and the grace which God bestowed on those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? One could scarcely fancy that there had been such a man; one could not envy such an one if he had existed. Onesiphorus surely, as he wended his way from Paul's prison, did not think lightly of the grace and privileges in which, formerly a Gentile, he now shared, and for the maintenance of which Paul was suffering. To have the

courage to stand by him was one thing; to have seen him in prison, and to have thought lightly of the privileges, to maintain which for them he was suffering, was another. Remembering that he did thus suffer, should any Christian in our day be contented to have no interest in that especial revelation of God's mind, because of which the apostle endured so much? This appeal might well challenge each one who reads it even now.

"I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you the Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God given me for you-ward." This calls us to hearken to that which, in the goodness and wisdom of God, was made known to Paul for us; viz., the revelation of the mystery. What that is he briefly tells us; viz., that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel. Nothing that God had given to His saints from among the Jews were those formerly Gentiles now to be without. Of the heirship, and of the promise in Christ through the gospel, we have already heard in chap. i. 3–14. The truth of the Body, too, was just touched on (23), practical teaching in connection with which we shall meet with lower down.

Charged then with the communication to others of this revelation, the ministry of the apostle Paul had a double character. He announced the good news among the Gentiles of the unsearchable riches of the Christ, and enlightened all (not Gentiles only) as to the dispensation of that mystery, hidden from the ages in God, who created all things,* and which is now revealed not only for the joy of saints, but also for the mani-

* "By Jesus Christ" should be omitted.

festation of the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies by the Church. What is revealed on this earth, so small a part of creation, as concerning the saints, is a subject of interest, as redounding to God's glory, to all the angelic host; and this was planned by God according to His eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.

The mystery stated, and the double character of Paul's ministry defined, he now prays for the saints to the Father,* of whom every family in the heaven and on earth is named, that He would give the saints according to the wealth of His glory to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that the Christ, the centre of all God's ways, might dwell in their hearts by faith; that they, rooted and grounded in love, might be thoroughly able to apprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that they might be filled unto all the fulness of God. His desires thus expressed, he closes the subject with a doxology: "To Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, to Him be glory in the Church, and in Christ Jesus, unto all the generations of the age of ages; *i.e.* for ever and ever. Amen."

Exhortations now follow: first, with reference to ecclesiastical relationships (iv. 1–16); secondly, as to that which became them as saints (17–v. 20); and thirdly, as to their relations to one another in the family and in the household. (v. 21–vi. 9.)

* "Of our Lord Jesus Christ" should be omitted.

Called, as they were, with a calling which gave special privileges to the subjects of it, Paul exhorts them to walk worthy of it. And brought, as the saints were, into such closeness with each other, being God's habitation by the Spirit, and members together of the body of Christ, Christian graces would be needed to walk worthy of their calling. So Paul characterises the *spirit* in which they were to walk, and the *end* they were steadily to keep in view. On the *spirit* he dwells in verse 2. It was to be with all lowliness and meekness; these are characteristic of Christ, who is our life. Next the apostle mentions long-suffering, for the full exhibition of which we must turn to God's ways with man. As God's children the saints were to comport themselves in their ecclesiastical relations one with another. Then he impresses on them mutual forbearance in love; for this we need the Holy Ghost really working in us. Thus the manifestation of Christ as our life, the proof that we are partakers of the divine nature, and that the Holy Ghost is really working in us—all this would be required for saints to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. Then the *end* to be kept in view is stated; (3) viz., to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, maintaining practically and in peace if possible, the unity formed by the baptism of the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. xii. 13.) Now unity is seen to be in harmony with the divine mind, whether we look at the Church, the Body of Christ, or whether we contemplate the whole range of profession on earth, or lift up our eyes to survey the universe. "There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father

of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." (iv. 4–6.)

But in this unity, which comprises all real Christians, there is seen diversity in the gifts or graces given to each one in the Body of Christ, and in the service looked for from those who compose it. On this Paul next dwells. To every one is given grace or gift according to the measure of the gift of Christ; *i.e.* as He gives it. And from Him, the ascended One, gifts as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, have been given, for (πρὸς) the perfecting of the saints unto (εἰς) a work of ministry, unto (εἰς) the edifying of the Body of Christ. The perfecting of the saints is the special end in view, and is effected through the gifts by the work of the ministry and the edifying of the Body of Christ. Thus, whilst saintship and church calling are quite distinct lines of truth, no saint could be now perfected without being part of the Body of Christ, nor fully instructed if he stopped short of teaching about the Church of God. So this ministry by the gifts will go on "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. In order that we should be no more babes, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men in unprincipled cunning, with a view to systematised error; but holding the truth in love, may grow up unto Him in all things who is the Head; the Christ, from whom the whole Body, fitted together and connected by every joint of supply, according to the working in the measure of each one part, works for itself the increase of the Body to itself, building up in love." (8–16.) Such is God's desire and

provision for the saints in Christ Jesus. Their perfecting is the end in view, to be effected by the gifts mentioned, the need for which is detailed in verses 13–15; whilst verse 16 has reference to the corporate condition, the Body increasing by the right acting of every joint of supply, according to the working in its measure of each part.

From this he passes on to exhortations with reference to their daily walk as saints; and here nothing is too small to be noticed. The most ordinary morality the Spirit insists on, and that in an epistle which dwells on the highest truths. The moral condition of Gentiles has been described, as well as their former dispensational distance when compared with the privileged place of those once Jews. (ii.) Now the apostle reminds his readers of the practices of Gentiles in daily life, which these converts were henceforth to avoid. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye walk not as the Gentiles walk."* Such walked in the vanity of their mind, in darkness and in ignorance. On these points he dwells in iv. 22–v. 2; v. 3–14, 15–21, writing to those who had learned the Christ, having heard Him, and being instructed by Him as the truth is in Jesus. What that is Paul explains in verses 22–24.

Coming to details, the first thing insisted on is to put away lying, and to speak every man truth with his neighbour. The reason assigned for this is in perfect character with the doctrine dwelt on in the previous chapters, "For we are members one of another." Thus church truth is to be brought into practice in daily life.

* The best authorities leave out '*other*.' For those written to were Gentiles no longer; they formed part of the Church of God. (See 1 Cor. x. 32.)

Further the apostle warns us against the desires of the mind, and comes down to the mention of stealing, and of watchfulness as to speech. Against both of these the saints are warned in connection with the special teaching of the epistle. The thief is to steal no more, but to labour, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Nothing should proceed from the lips, but that which may minister grace to the hearers. The activity of grace is to characterise him who once plundered others. The profit of his hearers is to be kept in view by him who had previously given licence to his tongue. And who were these people to whom he thus writes? They were sealed by the Spirit to the day of redemption. (iv. 30.) They were God's children, so were to imitate Him. (iv. 32–v. 1.) They had Christ as their life, and He was to be their example. (v. 2.)

Warnings against the workings of the flesh now follow. (v. 3–14.) None practising such filthiness have any inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and God (5), and because of these things the wrath of God comes on the sons of disobedience. With such they were not to be partakers; for they were formerly "darkness, but now light in the Lord; hence as children of light they should walk: (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." Further, they were to walk not as fools, but as wise. (15–21.) Ignorance characterized Gentiles; understanding what the will of the Lord is, was to characterize them. Nor were they to seek for fleshly stimulants, but to be filled with the Holy Ghost, which would manifest itself in the joy they would possess, and the spirit of subjection which would mark them.

This introduces the injunctions concerning relative duties in the family and in the household; wives and husbands, children and fathers, slaves and masters, each receiving their appropriate word. For wives and husbands the example of the Church's subjection to Christ, and His service and care for it are respectively set forth, the closest of earthly ties being a figure of the relation of Christ with the Church. One sees at a glance the propriety of this being dwelt upon in this epistle. It would lead us, however, beyond the limits of our space to dwell at any length on that wonderful display of love, in which, as part of the Church, we share, a love which moved Christ to give Himself for her, and which moves Him to minister to her, that He may at length present her to Himself, a Church glorious, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing; but that she should be holy and without blame, thus answering to that which He Himself was, and is. No wonder then, if that is His desire for the Church, that such pains are taken with the different classes who compose it, exhorting them in their different positions and relationships how to walk and to act.

Relative duties in the family and the household having been dwelt on, the apostle turns back to that which concerns them all equally, and exhorts all to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and to take each one for himself, or herself, the whole armour of God to stand against the wiles of the devil. The unceasing service of Christ to the Church we read of in chapter v. The unceasing watchfulness of the enemy to ensnare or trip up the saints we are reminded of in chapter vi. If the saints are seated in the heavenlies in Christ, the devil is still in the heavenlies

likewise. We cannot drive him out as Israel, under Joshua, were to have expelled the Canaanites and the Amorites, &c. But we are to be armed with the panoply of God to maintain our footing where God has placed us. The armour put on, and the one offensive weapon in the hand, the word of God, the sword of the Spirit, used by the Lord in the wilderness, and found sufficient, the constant spirit of dependence which is to characterize each saint is kept before us, and of the interest which all should take in the welfare of the saints, and in the spreading abroad of God's work by His word, the apostle reminds us; exhorting all to prayer at all times, and to be watching unto it with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, and for him, the prisoner as he was, that he might make known the mystery of the gospel for which he was an ambassador in chains. Who should take a deeper and a more general interest in the work of God on earth than those who are the greatest subjects of divine grace?

Now he closes. Counting on their interest in all that concerns him, Tychicus, the bearer of the epistle, was charged to acquaint them with it, and to encourage their hearts. He had inculcated a spirit of love and interest in all the saints. He would himself exemplify it with his concluding words: "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptness."

C. E. S.

WAITING FOR CHRIST.

We see thus what a strengthening thing is the waiting for Christ. It is not spoken of here in the highest way, but it is the same general principle. I am waiting. I do not think much of an uncomfortable inn if I know that I am only there for two or three days on the way. I might perhaps wish it were better; but I do not trouble myself much about it, because I am not living there. I am not living in this world, I am dying here; if there is a bit of the old life, it has to be put to death. My life is hid with Christ in God. I am waiting for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ—waiting for God's Son from heaven, who is going to take us there, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away; and all that we pass through here is merely this exercise of heart, which God sees to be needed to bring us there, where the Lord Himself will have us with Himself, and that for ever. And there is nothing more practically important for every-day work and service than our waiting for God's Son from heaven. If you want to know what this world is, and if you want to get comfort for your soul, you will be waiting for God's Son from heaven. If I am belonging to the world, I cannot have comfort. The apostle says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." And if we are getting into ease in it, we shall find His discipline. But the moment I am waiting for God's Son from heaven, my life is but the dealings of God with me as an object, and that

object that it should be to praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Let me ask you all to search and see what would be the effect of Christ's coming on your souls? Would it be this? Here I am passing through in heaviness because of manifold temptations; but He will come and take me out of it to Himself? Or would it surprise you? Would it find you with a number of things which you would have to leave behind? As to your heart, where is your heart with respect to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? Young or old (there may be more to learn if we are young; but), would the coming of the Lord Jesus find you with plenty of things to throw overboard? or with this feeling, Here is an end of all the exercise of heart? He for whom I have been waiting is coming to take me to Himself. There is the difference between Christians. If my whole life is founded upon this, that His will is the motive and spring of it, I shall find the exercises and the needed trial; but the coming of the Lord would be simply this to my soul, He is coming to take me away to Himself. J. N. D.

ONE danger for Christians, at the present moment, is the desire for stimulants in teaching. This also characterized Israel. (Amos ii. 11.) But stimulants are not only not food, but, in the end, they create a distaste for it. They serve only to excite the imagination, intellect, or nature, and never reach the conscience or the heart. The evidence of this desire is the itching ear. (2 Tim. iv. 3.) Christ, and Christ alone, is the food of His people.

CAIN AND ABEL.

LET us look a little at the religious characters of Cain and Abel. They were both alike as to outward character and circumstance. They were both under the sentence of banishment from the presence of God. They both had employment, and both seemed to have been outwardly decent characters. They both came to worship, too, and Cain brought that which cost him most—that for which he had worked. God had sent him forth to till the ground, and he tilled it. That was all right, and it was right for him to bring an offering. The difference between them was not in all that. In outward character, too, Cain was just like Abel: nothing came out amiss until he killed his brother. What was the mistake in Cain? There was no sense upon his heart that he was driven out of paradise because he deserved it; he might not have known that he was driven out even; for he thought he had nothing to do but to go to God as if it was all right with Him. This is just what men are doing now. They are driven from God's presence and favour, going on with their occupations, tilling the ground and the like, and, when the time comes round, thinking to come and worship. What would a father feel about his child who had been disobedient to him one day, and coming the next, just as if nothing had happened, expecting to be received as though all was right between him and his father? This is just what men are doing with God. But, dear friends, you are out of paradise, and can you think to come and worship God as if nothing had happened? Are you

expecting to get into heaven just the same as (not one whit better than) Adam was when he got out of paradise? If you get into heaven you would spoil it; but the truth is, you are making your own heaven down here.

Abel was not a bit better than Cain as to his position and nature; but there is one great difference—he owns it all, and obtained testimony that he was righteous. "By faith he offered to God a more excellent sacrifice," &c. It might have been said he was not so right as Cain in a natural sense, as to his calling; for God had not set men to keep sheep, and he had to till the ground; but he brought a sacrifice from the flock, a bloody sacrifice. He had a sense of being out of paradise; but, more than that, he had a sense of being an outcast for sin. He felt he was a sinner. He had a sense of having broken with God, and God with him, and he knew Him to be of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He owned that God had not done wrong in turning man out, and that it would be wrong to let him in. He owned that death hung over him as his proper desert. "It is God's sentence upon me, and my ruin is my desert." These things had such a reality to his soul that he would have known it would have been presumption for him to have gone to God as though nothing had happened. Then he had something more still; for he had learnt through the grace of God that there was something needed between him and God, and that this something was there. Sacrifice was the only way. God says, "I cannot look at sin; but there is one thing I can look at—an offering about sin, and that is my Son as a sin-offering." Faith apprehends this, and there was no thought of coming in any other way. "There will I meet with thee," God said to Moses. And what did he

put at the door of the tabernacle? The altar of burnt-offering, the sacrifice for sin, God had there; and faith rests on this as the only possible way of approach.

There was no climbing up some other way. There is but this one door by which to enter, and it is through that sacrifice by which the holiness of God is fully maintained, as well as His love manifested in the highest way. I want to see my sin put away in His sight, just as I see it brought out first in His sight; and here is the perfect sin-offering, and there is no place where this wonderful question of good and evil has been judged as at the cross of Christ. The sacrifice is fully accepted. He has borne all the wrath, and put it away. Hear Him saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There was perfect obedience and perfect love. He was a perfect sin-offering; and there He is now at the right hand of the Father. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." His offering for sin has for ever settled the question of sin. He has made peace about my sin, and for my sin; and has He done it in part? Would that be like God? No; it was complete. "When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." When I see that, I cannot go to God as Cain did, just as I am; and yet I must go to Him if I am to have happiness or blessing. But I also see that God has provided Himself with a burnt-offering. It is taken out of our hands, as it were; it is God's own perfect work; it is His settling of sin, and I can rest in the result of what He has offered. This is faith. Now we go to God by Him. This is, as it were, offering Christ. God gives me the resting-place, and the convinced sinner cannot come to Christ without finding

appointed duration of his day of grace, the word of the Father to the Son will bring Him on love's delightful errand to receive His bride in His own likeness, to Himself for ever. Can you, my reader, estimate the untold joy that will then flood His blessed heart? or how much even now He is cheered by its bright anticipation? How blessedly then, if we are to share that joy, ought our hearts to be anticipating the blissful moment when He shall appear, and by His appearing shall swallow up death in victory, and shall close our path of tears and toil and testimony, that He may present us before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy!

In two foregoing papers we looked a little at the fact, that "as He is so are we in this world," and "where I am there shall also my servant be." The first is our divine standing, the second our heavenly place and portion. We now glance at that incomparable event which shall bring into full display the two former things, to the deep delight of our hearts, and, above all, to the immeasurable glory and joy of our beloved Lord. In Col. iii. is a scripture which appears to bring before us all three of these. "If ye then be risen with Christ" (our standing), "seek those things which are *above*, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things *above*, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid *with Christ* in God" (our heavenly place and portion). "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (the consummation which we await). Observe how in each of these what gives character to the thing is, *with Christ*. (1) He is risen, and we are risen *with Him*. (2) He has gone above, and our portion is where He is; our life is hid *with Christ* in God.

(3) He is going to be manifested in glory, and we are going to be manifested *with Him*. How it enhances all our blessing that we enter upon it with Him, and shall enjoy it with Him, and shall be manifested in it with Him. Thus what we are, and have, and shall be, are all closely and indissolubly associated with Christ; and no heart that values Him but will acknowledge how it adds thereto a spiritual zest that nothing else could impart.

He who appeared once here below, manifested on the earth, and in whom God was manifest in the flesh, has now gone to appear before the face of God for us; and yet again will He appear or be manifested to them who look for Him. (Heb. ix. 24–28.) How characteristically does the apostle here speak of believers as "them that look for Him." He accounts it to be the moral mark of a Christian that he looks for Christ, as in Thessalonica the young believers to whom he wrote were marked by waiting for God's Son from heaven. But we have also a more striking word in Paul's memorable valediction to his dear son in the faith (2 Tim. iv. 8), "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that *love His appearing*." This surely goes beyond the waiting, and the watching, and the looking for Him; it appeals more closely to the feelings. If I *love* His appearing, it is evident that my heart is set upon it, my affections are engaged by it. It is that deep desire of love which is expressed in that divine unity in which "the Spirit and the bride say, Come." Let us challenge our hearts, dear reader. Do we indeed "*love* His appearing"? Is it really a matter of heart exercise with us, a desire far deeper than any words can express? The bride in the

Canticles (chap. ii. 17) gives us the expression of her desire, saying, "Be thou like to a roe, or a young hart, on the mountains of Bether" (division or separation); *i.e.* passing over all that divides or separates from her the object of her longing heart. Peter commends His appearing to the elders of the flock as the consummation to be looked for: "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." And, lastly, John, in his first epistle, exhorts the children to abide in Him, "that when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." Again he says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Our being with Him, our being like Him, and our being an adequate testimony of the magnificence of His grace, all wait for that day of glory so soon to break upon us, "when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." May He so powerfully captivate our hearts and occupy our affections that, having so blessed a hope in Him, we may purify ourselves, even as He is pure, looking for that crown of righteousness which He will surely give to all them that love His appearing. Because He lives we live also; as He is, so are we in this world; where He is, there we shall be also; and when He shall appear we shall be like Him, and appear with Him in glory! What can we say to such a magnificent chain of associated blessedness, but anticipate the language we shall adopt when all this is accomplished, falling down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, and worshipping Him who sits upon the throne, saying, "Amen, Alleluia"? (Rev. xix. 4.)

W. R.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE FIRST-BORN.

THE words that Moses heard out of the midst of the fire in the bush must not only have awakened in his heart the remembrance of God's goodness towards the fathers, but also have shown him that he had a personal link with the God of Abraham; for God had said to him, "I am the God *of thy father*." (The faith of Moses' parents is made mention of in Heb. xi.) But "Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." Such was necessarily the effect produced on the heart by the presence of God when He was not known as the Justifier. The instant it becomes a question of appearing before God, conscience makes itself heard bearing witness that we are *sinners*.

When Jacob had seen in his dream the magnificent vision of the ladder, whose top reached heaven, he awoke to the consciousness of the presence of God, and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Surely God had only spoken to him in words of grace and goodness; but his conscience in the presence of a holy God condemned him, and his soul was filled with fear.

We find the same thing in the case of Isaiah the prophet. (See Isa. vi.) He saw "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims. . . . And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory."

Then the prophet cries, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." God's answer to the prophet's cry, though it brought fully into light the real secret of his distress, applied to him the needed remedy at the same moment. One of the seraphims touched his lips with a live coal from off the altar of burnt-offering, and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

God knows what we need. He acts by His Spirit to produce "truth in the inward parts," bringing us into His own presence, that there we may be made aware of our true state; but there too He makes known to us the fulness of that redemption by virtue of which He is righteous in "justifying him who believes in Jesus." (Rom. iii. 26.) Before Christ had suffered for our sins, God, knowing what He was going to do in order to put them away righteously, "forbore" with sins; that is to say, He did not impute them to those who believed on Him, although He could not yet direct their hearts to an already accomplished redemption. Psalm xxxii., which is quoted in Rom. iv., speaks of the blessedness of this forgiveness, though still looking on, in the spirit of prophecy, to its complete fulfilment; but after the death of Christ, God could make known to all that He had been righteous in granting it in anticipation of the work of redemption. (Rom. iii. 25.) In the various offerings God set forth by means of types, which all pointed to the one great sacrifice, the principle on which alone the righteousness of God could be satisfied with respect to sin; for "without shedding of blood

there is no remission." (Heb. ix. 22.) God was revealing Himself as "the God that taketh away iniquity, transgression, and sin;" and although only in figure, still He made it clear that for the putting away of sin there must be shed the blood of a spotless victim. But if we are thus delivered from judgment, we are at the same time sanctified, or set apart in holiness to God. Therefore we read (Heb. ix. 13, 14): "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" This is precisely what Isaiah found through grace at the seraph's hand; and we shall see the same principle presented in figure in the history of Moses, at the time when "the deliverance," of which God had spoken to him in the bush, was about to be accomplished.

God had said to Moses, "The cry of the children of Israel is come up unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." (Ex. iii. 9, 10.) In accomplishing the work of deliverance God brought nine plagues upon the Egyptians. At the moment when He was about to send upon them the last, which was to smite all the first-born of the land of Egypt, He instituted the passover as the means of sheltering His people from the sword of the destroying angel, who was to execute His judgment. The blood of the paschal lamb, sprinkled on the two side-posts and on the upper

door-post, put the house and all who were in it beyond the reach of the sword of judgment: "For," it is said, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the *Lord*. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." (Ex. xii. 12, 13.) At the same time the Lord says to Moses: "Sanctify unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine." (Ex. xiii. 1, 2.) Similarly in Num. iii. 12, 13 we find it stated of the children of Israel: "All the first-born are mine; for on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the first-born in Israel." God comes down to deliver His people; that is the first truth set before us, and the immediate result of it is that His people are set apart for Him. This great moral principle is thus clearly established, the destruction of the first-born being an intimation of God's thoughts as to this world, shadowing forth beforehand the judgment reserved for it.

The deliverance corresponds in extent to the judgment, and expresses at the same time the measure of personal sanctification, which is intimately linked up with the deliverance itself. "Fear not," it is said: "for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; THOU *art* MINE." And again, "*This people have I formed for myself;* they shall shew forth my praise." (Isa. xliii. 1, 21.) So too, after the complete deliverance of the people of Israel from the land of Egypt, God

sends them this message by Moses: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you UNTO MYSELF. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, *and* AN HOLY NATION." (Ex. xix. 4–6.)

But the consecration to God of all the first-born in Israel supplies us with other unfoldings as to the character of personal holiness; it shows us in what it consists, as well as the extent of its practical application. In an especial manner God said of every first-born, "It is MINE." This implied that it was to be offered in sacrifice; and with every clean animal this was the case. "The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen and with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me." (Exod. xxii. 29, 30.) Unclean domestic animals were to be redeemed: "But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb." And this same principle is applied to man: "All the first-born of thy sons thou shalt redeem." (Exod. xxxiv. 20.)

Now this redemption of the first-born sons in Israel was accomplished in a remarkable manner. (The details are given at the beginning of the book of Numbers.) They were replaced by the Levites. "Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the first-born that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be MINE." (Num. iii. 12.) The Levites were thenceforth consecrated to the service of God, for the

charge of the tabernacle, for the service of the priests, and afterwards for the instruction of the people in the law of God. They had no inheritance as a separate tribe amongst the children of Israel, but were to live on the tithes of the produce of the land, brought regularly by the people. "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord." (Lev. xxvii. 30; Num. xviii. 21–24; Deut. xxvi. 12, 13.)

We see, therefore, that the consecration that flowed from redemption was *entire and personal.* As the sacrifice was wholly consumed upon the altar, thus the redeemed person is considered as belonging wholly to the Lord, soul and body, and in every respect set apart for His service.

The Lord said of His sheep, "I know *my* sheep;" to His Father He says of them, "The men which *thou gavest me* out of the world." (John x. xvii.) Consequently the exhortation addressed by the Spirit to the believer is, that "ye present your bodies a *living sacrifice*, holy, acceptable unto God" (Rom. xii. 1); and again, "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Rom. vi. 13, 14.) The Christian, brought to God, and already delivered from death and judgment and Satan's power, is to live in dependence upon God and in communion with Him; so that the fulness of the redemption wrought for him may be reflected in the details of his daily walk. He has been delivered from the world, and from the judgment that is to come upon it; his daily life is therefore to express that he is

dead to the world, and alive unto God, and that, recognizing that he is a pilgrim and stranger upon the earth, he is seeking the country and the city which God has prepared for him; for he already possesses, by faith, his inheritance in the heavenly Jerusalem. There is seen "the assembly of *the first-born*, which are written in heaven;" there are enjoyed the presence and communion of God the Judge of all, surrounded as He is "by the spirits of just men made perfect;" there is found the climax of eternal joy and blessing in Jesus, the First-born from among the dead, the Mediator of a new covenant. There too the soul finds the ground of all confidence before God, in "the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than Abel." There also we are surrounded by myriads of angels, the universal gathering, and learn that they are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. (Heb. xi. 13, 16; xii. 22, 24; i. 14.) Redemption brings us into the immediate presence of God, setting us there with a good conscience to learn that every need of the soul is met, and full provision made to meet all our spiritual enemies, and all the difficulties we have to encounter in this present life. Faith simply accepts what God has said, and takes freely and joyfully the place He has given. He has set us *in Christ;* and we have to learn in the path of obedience what it is to count on God in everything. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He has chosen us in Christ "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of

His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In whom we have redemption through the blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Eph. i. 4–7.)

We have only been able to glance at the truths contained in the sanctification of the first-born. But what a field of study is opened to us in the Word in connection with the service of the Levites! Our present purpose is, however, to confine ourselves to the great principles involved, and which we have sought to lay before our readers: first, what it is to have a "good conscience" in the presence of God, by means of the blood, under the shelter of which God has set us in sovereign grace; then that the completeness of personal consecration must correspond with the extent and perfection of the deliverance. Of course we do need God with us, as well as God for us, in order that this practical consecration may be carried out in practice. And He can never fail us. Moses went on in obedience, learning step by step from God the marvellous lessons of His grace. "Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them." (Heb. xi. 28.) Is he not in this a precious example for us—one of those witnesses of faith by whom we are "compassed about"?

W. J. L.

ALL right experience ends in forgetting self and thinking of Christ.

IF the believer is full of Christ, he does not even see the things around.

ON MINISTERING CHRIST.

(*Continued from page 56.*)

THE apostle Paul informs us that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.) He therefore charges the faithful servant to "preach the word;" not traditions of men, but "the word;" not deductions from the word, however interesting, but "the word;" not opinions about it, but "the word;" the divine authority of the word of God which is for ever settled in heaven, and liveth and abideth for ever. That which is to be proclaimed (and especially because of the false teaching and fables which abound) is the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe. It is in fact the only basis for faith—the incorruptible seed by which we have been born again, and the sincere milk by which those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious can be fed and grow thereby. Can there be, then, the ministry of Christ, if the divine authority of Scripture be not enforced? May the Lord graciously enable us so to love the word of God, understand it by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, mix faith with it, treasure it up in our hearts, and so prove it as to be able to help others effectually by it!

It is most interesting to observe that one result of our Lord's ministry after His resurrection from the dead, when their understandings were opened to understand

the Scriptures concerning Himself, was that it made them all happy. Whatever their mistakes, or state of soul had been, all were set right, and all were filled with joy in having to do with the Lord Himself. Not only did those who had been depressed and sorrowful exclaim, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" but it is said of the timid ones, who had been fearing the Jews, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." When affrighted ones were told by Him that He was not a spirit, and He said, "It is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have . . . and He showed them His hands and His feet," then we are told that "they believed not for joy, and wondered." So happy did their precious Saviour leave them when "He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven," that we are told "they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." (Luke xxiv.) John too writes his first epistle to the saints that their joy might be full. Peter speaks of those who, though "in heaviness through manifold temptations," were so believing in Him whom having not seen they loved, as to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Paul enjoins the saints to "rejoice in the Lord always," and prays that the God of peace might fill them with all joy and peace in believing." Is it not clear, then, that one result to be looked for, when Christ is ministered, is that souls are made happy in Him? But how can we expect to be instrumental in filling others with joy, if we are not rejoicing in the Lord ourselves? A glance at some of the epistles is enough to show how fully and pointedly Christ was ministered in apostolic times, whatever

might be the state or circumstances of the saints addressed.

John wrote at a time when the person of our Lord was blasphemously assailed, when there were many antichrists, many false prophets gone out into the world; and of others he had to say, "They went out from us because they were not of us." And how does he begin his inspired letter? He begins by setting forth the divine and eternal excellence of the Son — "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Who was the eternal life with the *Father* but the *Son?* He then asserts the precious truth, that true Christian fellowship is "with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." He repeatedly speaks of the Father, and of His love in bringing us into new relationships, and giving us eternal life in the Son, all founded on the work of the cross. He declares that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin," and that if we sin, the Righteous One (Christ) is our Advocate with the Father, who is also the propitiation for our sins. He shows that those who are born of God do not practise sin; but, having eternal life, this life will be manifested in obedience, righteousness, and love.

Now it is easily seen that by this ministry of Christ, brought home by the power of the Holy Ghost, they would be delivered from a false Christ, by knowing the true One, of whom He speaks at the end of his letter as "the true God, and eternal life." By being established in their new and eternal relationships with the Father and the Son, and therefore with each other, they would be separated from false people and untrue associations; and by knowing they had eternal life in Christ, and

that the Spirit was given to abide with them, they would be encouraged in the life of obedience, righteousness, and love. They would see that "he that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself so to walk, even as He walked." It was certainly a most trying state of things, but the blessed and effectual remedy of the Holy Ghost was the suited and pointed ministry of Christ.

Look also at the epistle to the Hebrews. A very different state is here seen. They were in such a low condition as to be in danger of giving up Christianity and returning to the Jews' religion. And how were they met? By the ministry of Christ; and remarkably so out of their own Scriptures—the books of Moses, Psalms, and prophets. The Son in His deity, as well as true humanity, was most blessedly brought before them in the first two chapters. He is seen to be greater than angels, worthy of more glory than Moses and Aaron, Joshua, David, and even Abraham, so that all retire when the glory of His person is introduced, like the brightest stars cease to shine before the rising of the sun. The eternal Son—the heir of all things—who made all things, upholds all things, and is to have all things put under His feet, is here brought out. He is looked at before time, in time, and after time shall have passed away. His incarnation, life of sufferings and temptation, death, resurrection, glorification, and reign, when everything will be put under His feet, all pass before us. We see Him as the Purger of sins, the Captain of our salvation, the Destroyer of the devil, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, the Son over His own house, the Forerunner who is for us entered, an unchangeable Priest after the order of Melchisedec, the Leader and Completer of faith, the Mediator of the

new covenant, and the Great Shepherd of the sheep, who was brought again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant; and we are assured that "yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

We cannot fail to notice in what a variety of aspects the Lord Jesus is brought before the readers of this epistle, which no doubt is intended to teach us that we need the full revelation which God has given us of His own Son, and not merely to know Him as the Purger of our sins. Why the glory of His person is so clearly and richly unfolded in the beginning is because the prominent point in this epistle is the perfection of the one sacrifice and unchangeable priesthood of Christ, as contrasted with the oft-repeated sacrifices and many priests of a former dispensation, which was a time of types and shadows of the substantial realities in Christ. When one grasps the truth of the infinite perfections and glory of His person, it then becomes clear that an everlasting value is stamped on His work and offices. Thus the Hebrew believers were entitled to know that their sins were purged, and that God would remember them no more; that by that one offering they were purged worshippers, should have no more conscience of sins, and were perfected for ever. They had, as to God, liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; and as regards men, their place was with Christ outside the camp of formal religiousness, bearing His reproach, and, before the Lord comes, to be unning the race of faith with patience, and looking to Him, at God's right hand, for all the sustainment and encouragement they need. Can we conceive anything more calculated to deliver souls from Judaism, and to set them right with

God than this full and clear ministry of Christ? Well might the writer end his letter by enjoining them "to offer by Him (Christ) the sacrifice of praise to God continually," and not to forget "to do good, and to communicate;" "for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

In the first epistle to the Corinthians a state very different from those we have considered meets us. We here see the assembly in the greatest disorder, with rich gifts, flagrant sins, and erroneous doctrine. A brief look into the inspired letter is enough to show how simply and—as we learn from the second epistle—how effectually it was met by the suited ministry of Christ. But first let us observe that the three things which marked the Lord's epistles to the seven churches in the Revelation were also carried out by the apostle here: 1st., He approves in them everything he can; 2nd., He brings before them their evil ways and doctrines; and 3rd., He presents the remedy, which is always found in having to do with Christ Himself, as set forth in Scripture. And will not these points always characterize a divinely-given ministry to saints? The apostle knew well that "Christ is all," and that all our blessings are in Him, and through Him, and not at all after the flesh. He therefore addresses the Corinthians as "sanctified in Christ Jesus," where divine grace has set the feeblest believer. After having acknowledged with thankfulness to God the grace given them by Christ Jesus, their utterance, knowledge, and gifts, and their waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, he reminds them of God's faithfulness, and of His having called them unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which is also true of every believer.

Having thus shown them that they are set apart for God in Christ, and called to have partnership with Christ in His thoughts, love, joy, service, &c., he now turns to their faults. Having exposed the divisions among them, he meets all by bringing in Christ and His cross. He says, "Is Christ divided?" Are not all believers joined to the Lord one body? Then how can divisions be right? Can the human body be divided into parts, and still be in connection with the Head? "Was Paul crucified for you?" Then why take up his name? Then he refers to their boasted wisdom: "The Greeks seek after wisdom." The Corinthians were not free from this. But the world by wisdom knew not God, and Christ crucified is the wisdom of God. The apostle says, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." A crucified Christ, and a message of salvation to every one that believeth on Him, are counted by the wise Gentiles to be "foolishness;" and yet that cross shows man to be so ignorant that he did not know God, and so bad that he hated Him without a cause. Moreover, in the death of Christ not only were sins judged, but our old man was crucified with Him, which shows that man has now no place in the flesh before God, either as to righteousness or wisdom, but that He has given us a new life and standing in Christ Jesus, "who of God is made unto us wisdom." The cross put an end to man's boasted wisdom; this is why Paul would know nothing among them, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Next he touches their consciences about a flagrant

word of God, and how dear it is that the ministry of the Holy Ghost is that which ministers Christ to souls!

In the Lord's epistles to the seven churches, the various aspects in which He presents Himself to each assembly, according to its need and condition, is most striking. We would only now direct attention to one point. Looking at the seven epistles as giving the seven phases of the Church's course on earth in the place of corporate responsibility to the Lord, and considering that the last four have reference to the Lord's coming, and will go on together to the end, as Popery, Protestantism, Philadelphianism, and Laodiceanism, it is interesting to observe how the Lord presents Himself to them; for it is clear, if this be the fourfold state of Christendom to the end, that these presentations of the Lord must be the last kinds of His ministry till He come. And, briefly, what are they? His Person—"the Son of God." The Giver of the Holy Ghost, and source of gift—"He that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars." The holiness and truth suited to those gathered together in His name—"The Holy and the True." And the truth of the new creation—"the beginning of the creation of God." It becomes then a serious question whether, from the ministry that has gone forth in these last days, it is not Christ presenting Himself to Christendom in His last aspects? If so, how soon His word may be fulfilled: "Behold, I come quickly!"

It would be highly interesting to trace in other epistles the various ways in which the Lord Jesus Christ was presented to the saints, did our limits admit of it. We trust, however, that enough has been advanced to show that ministering Christ according to

we are necessarily separated from every false fellowship, and every table not the Lord's. (Chap. x.)

In the next chapter, where we find that the Lord's Supper had been mixed up with such carnality as to have lost its proper character among them, he brings in the Lord again to set all right. He shows that they had missed the Lord in it—had not discerned the Lord's body. He instructs them that it is the time for remembering the Lord, and showing the Lord's death till He come, who said, "Do this in remembrance of me." He shows them that here the Lord was everything; that the supper was in respect of the body and blood of the Lord, and that the chastening of the Lord had come in because they had not discerned the Lord's body. (1 Cor. xi.)

As to the doctrine which denied the resurrection of the body, the apostle at once brings in the Lord. He says, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen . . . and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished," &c. He asserts the fact that "He rose again the third day," that He did so "according to the Scriptures," and that His resurrection had been verified by the most ample, and competent, and incontrovertible testimony. He teaches that "Christ" has risen as "the first-fruits," and the next in order to rise are "they that are Christ's at His coming." He concludes by showing that Christ in His abounding grace has thus triumphed over death and the grave for us; so that we are now entitled to say, "Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." How manifold, then, are the ways in which Christ is ministered to us in the

SLEEP ON, BELOVED.

[The early Christians were accustomed to wish their dying friends "Good night," assured of their awakening at the resurrection.]

SLEEP on, beloved, sleep and take thy rest,
Lay down thy head upon thy Saviour's breast;
We love thee much, but Jesus loves thee best:
Good night!

Calm is thy slumber as an infant's sleep,
But thou shalt wake, no more to toil and weep;
Thine is a perfect rest, secure and deep:
Good night!

Until the shadows from this earth be cast,
Until He gathers in His sheaves at last,
Until the twilight gloom be overpast:
Good night!

Until the Eastern glory decks the skies,
And they that sleep in Jesus shall arise;
And He shall come, but not in lowly guise:
Good night!

Until made beautiful by love divine,
Thou in the likeness of thy Lord shalt shine;
And He shall bring that golden crown of thine:
Good night!

Only "Good night," beloved, *not* farewell;
"A little while," and all His saints shall dwell
In hallowed union indivisible:
Good night!

Until we meet again before His throne,
Clothed in the spotless robe He gives His own;
Until we know Him e'en as we are known:
Good night!

ANON.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

JOHN x.

THIS chapter gives us the love of Christ so wonderfully displayed as the Good Shepherd—but it is exceedingly necessary to get a clear apprehension of the striking contrast between Judaism and Christianity, and this distinction has been greatly lost sight of. The way Christianity is unfolded in the word of God is an immense help to the child of God, because when it is acted on, it separates from that which is contrary to it.

"Verily, verily, I say unto *you*" connects it with the preceding chapter; for these Pharisees who said, "*We see*," taking the ground of seeing and knowing, had no sense of need, and so the Lord utters that solemn word, "Therefore your sin remaineth." (John ix. 41.) Then He takes the occasion given Him by their pride to give a short history of His ways with the children of Israel. Judaism is spoken of in the first six verses; then in verse 7, He comes to Christianity.

"He that entereth in *by the door* is the shepherd of the sheep." Everything that was foretold of the Lord Jesus He answered to; every rightful ordinance for Him to pass through He recognized and fulfilled, and He passes into the sheepfold by the door, and "to Him the porter openeth." The people of Israel were shut off from all other people, still the sheepfold was only Judaism, and into this sheepfold the true Shepherd of Israel comes. He enters into this system, which God had organized, answering to every claim of Scripture. Then "*to Him* the porter openeth"—the porter,

Jehovah acting by the Spirit of God in Israel, the one who had the care of Israel opened to the Messiah; and the moment He entered the sheep recognized His voice, "the sheep hear His voice" as the promised One, such as Simeon and Anna in Luke ii. There was the full, distinct recognition of Christ when He entered in.

All this has not to do with us Gentiles, but it is an immense thing to contemplate something that has nothing to do with us. We were Gentiles entirely outside it; we never were in it, or shall be. Then it goes on, "He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them *out*." It was not to be a continuation of this system, for "His own received Him not," and it is about to be set aside as no longer God's system on the earth. The Lord Jesus calls out *from* Israel, and in chap. ix. a man is found *outside* in the company of Christ. "He calleth His own sheep by *name*." After the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, what a moment of recognition there was between Him and Mary! "Jesus saith unto her, Mary." There should be such personal acquaintance between Christ and His sheep; and if there is anything necessary in this day it is individual acquaintance with Christ. He leads His sheep outside the recognized systems of earth. It is not at all a question of what they are coming *to*, but *He* calls them by name, and leads them out. That word "leadeth" is beautiful; it is not, *drive* them out. He never drives anybody out. If we are stubborn He deals with us, and chastens us; but He delights to *lead* His people, only there must be on our side real confidence in Him to confide ourselves to His guidance—no resistance, but a beautiful spirit of subjection.

"And when He putteth forth His own sheep, *He*

goeth before them," and that is one thing that ever marks Christ, whether in Judaism or in Christianity. He loved His sheep in that day, and He loves them in this day, and He never allows them to face a difficulty alone. *He* faces the difficulty. We never shall find ourselves in circumstances where *He* has not been before us. "He goeth *before* them" all the way. We travel no uncertain path, not groping in darkness, but walking in the light of heaven, where He has gone before us. There may be difficulties, cares, and exercises, but the fact is that Christ has gone before, and "marked out the path that we tread." It was true in Judaism too, as in Christianity; but the one great thing for our souls now is acquaintance with Christ. You and I know the Lord Jesus Christ better than the disciples on earth knew Him: it seems much to say, but it is true. When Jesus said to the disciples, "Will ye also go away?" Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." It was as much as saying, "We have no shelter without Thee." They knew the Lord, but not in the full measure we can know Him now. The Holy Ghost had not been given as in this day. The Holy Ghost has come down to dwell in all those that believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and we have by Him a more wonderful knowledge of the perfectness of the work of Christ and His love. He said when here, 'You will be better off when I go away; "for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you."' (John xvi. 7.) We are gainers by the absence of Christ, because of the Holy Ghost. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." (John xiv. 20.) He spoke of a day that was future then. There is then a character of blessing in this day which the disciples

had not, but they knew the voice of Christ. There is nothing that so blinds the understanding as self-sufficiency. There is one bright, beautiful avenue to our understanding, and that is the moment we are down in the sense of our own weakness and in dependence. Then there is no opposition; but when we say, "We see," that is the greatest barrier. By taking the place of ignorance and of dependence on Him, then we understand.

The Lord does not go on now to *explain* the parable, but He tells something perfectly new, which had never been known before. And it is a serious question for the consideration of our hearts; for in Christendom at large the immense distinction between Judaism, on the one hand, and Christianity on the other, is lost sight of. In Judaism it was a ceremonial religion, the observing of ordinances, &c.; everything to touch the natural man was done; but you get nothing of the kind in Christianity. This new system—and I say *system* because we cannot do what is right in our *own* eyes; and the way to find our place in the Church of God is to get our places as individual sheep, hearing His voice and guided by Him. There must be individual association with Christ, the knowledge of His own person.

"Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep." Think for a moment what a wonderful thing that is. You are shut up to something, or rather to *Someone;* and what a moment, never to be forgotten by the soul, when I find out that I am for time and for eternity shut up to *Christ*, nothing but Christ! And He stands and says, "*I* am the door of the sheep." You ask, "What does Christianity begin with?" It begins with the "I" of

this verse. And what does it go on with? With the "I" of this verse. And it *ends* with the "I" of this verse. What *is* Christianity to us? The "I" of this verse. "*I* set everything else aside, *I* have called my sheep out from this fold, and *I* announce and declare to you that *I* am the only door into everlasting blessing." I know that this is the gospel in its simplest character. The door *into* what? and *out of* what? What do we leave? and what do we enter? I pass out of a standing where there is nothing but ruin, and I pass into a sphere of everlasting joy and blessing. But oh, what a door to pass through! what a threshold to cross! Judaism and ordinances over for ever; no longer a question of Jew or Gentile, but from the queen on her throne to the poorest peasant in the land, there is no other way *in* but by the Lord Jesus Christ. The door is open wide at this hour, and you may enter in. If you pass inside what joy there! Don't tell me what you have *outside*. It is death, sorrow, misery, and unsatisfying things; but oh, if you were *inside* for one single hour, in all the joy of His presence, you would know the wonderful difference between inside and outside! What do you leave outside? All your sins put away by the death of Christ. And what *are* you inside? A "saved" person. And you "shall go in and out and find pasture." That is a beautiful figure of liberty. It is not that you can do as you like, but there *is* nothing but liberty in Christianity and pasture. Oh, it is a real thing this salvation! But the only liberty is in subjection; no joy apart from subjection to Christ. Pasture and food are found for us. No person is practically found in Ps. xxiii. who is not in a state of subjection to Christ. You can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," and stop there; but can you say,

"I shall not want"? That is subjection. There may be trouble, want, and difficulty; but do you know "*I* walk beside still waters"? "He *leadeth* me beside still waters." If He *leads* you, you have no will; it is a question of what the *Lord* wants and wills, not you. Do you think *He* cares more for your happiness in this world, or you yourself? Which do you think cares most? Does not He know best? Oh, that is the work to go through in your soul! There is nothing gloomy in Christianity; there is nothing but the radiance of the light of heaven. You must be alone with Christ, and know Him in heavenly light and glory, and the radiance of the Father's house; and if you know Him, and "go in and out," and know the green pastures and the still waters, it is a *real* thing. You are independent of everything, because you are dependent only on Christ.

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." A dark background, but He draws only the brighter contrast. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Eternal life is a thing that is possessed in this world, and it is Christ Himself. "Everlastingly secure," people say it means, and it is true; but it is Christ. There are three things about eternal life. "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." And then there is such a thing as "Lay hold of eternal life;" and I believe that means a person so set upon God that he is enabled to *lay hold* of eternal life; it is the soul's embrace of Christ. I apprehend the person of Christ in heaven, who is the eternal life, and that's "laying hold." The more you are in faith and "following after faith"—that principle which we have within—viewing things as God

sees them (that's faith), and then these things that cramp and deaden us, the soul rises above them and lays hold on eternal life. You must go in for *something;* not spending your life in ordinary visits, &c.; but you must have an *object* in your life, and this is it—"Lay hold on eternal life." And the third thing is in Romans vi.: "And the end everlasting life." There is the end to it all, to my path, and journey, and service. We get into a sphere marked and characterized by all that belongs to Christ, and *that's "the end."*

"That they might have it more *abundantly.*" If you study Scripture as to "abundance," you will see that God delights in abundance. "Abundance of grace" (Rom. v. 17), "Life more abundantly" (John x. 10), "The Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly." (Titus iii. 6.) And He delights to look on the servant passing along through this world, and looking at everything in relation to the kingdom, where its counterpart will be produced. I say the *kingdom,* not heaven, for we get into heaven on one common title—the blood of Christ; but when it becomes a question of the Lord Jesus Christ coming out from heaven, and bringing His saints with Him to reign, He looks that not only may you have "abundance of grace," and "life more abundantly" (His own victorious life), but He says, 'I want you to have an "abundant entrance"' (2 Peter i. 11); "for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Enter that kingdom with flying colours; the fight well fought; the race well run. *Here* rejection and scorn may be, but the kingdom is *there;* and if you have ever known a sorrow because of faithfulness to Christ, there will be a most abundant answer

to it all *there*. If you have ever stood aside, and said, "I can't go here and there," He will own it abundantly. And I am not surprised, nor are you surprised, at anything that the Lord Jesus can do for us after *dying* for us. You are not surprised at any character of blessing He does for you after dying for you. If He wants to bless you He must have His own way, and do it after His own heart. If He calls us out of our hiding-places in this world, and gives us eternal life, it is according to His own everlasting grace.

"I am the Good Shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." You will notice, of course, how the Lord calls attention to what *He* is so much. We are shut up to *Christ*, and that is God's thought for us, and the Holy Ghost's object in coming. The hireling flees when he sees the wolf coming; the sheep are not his. The Good Shepherd does not flee; the sheep *belong* to Him. So the Lord Jesus stays by us because we belong to Him.

Verses 14, 15, should be read as one verse: "I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father." There is a character of knowledge between the Father and the Son—"*so* I know my sheep, and my sheep know me." It is not a question of whether you are *up* to it, but it is an abstract truth, because you have the life of the Son of God, and a nature in which the Spirit of God acts. You are brought into this place of blessing, so that all the character of blessing that exists between the Father and the Son is what exists between the Shepherd and His sheep. How much have we learnt of Christ? Is it not only just this—that we all stand on the shore of the ocean, and we *stoop* (as we

must if we want blessing) and take of the water; but it is only a taste, though it is an infinite, unknown depth from which we shall drink for ever? Rev. vii. 13–17 comes in in connection with it. It is the day of blessing which awaits His earthly people, and there is something for us which exceeds it. The mind of man never could have wrapt together blessings so marvellous as verse 17—they will be *wonderful*—"shall feed them and shall *lead* them." You will never get anything without being *led*. They are led *unto* living fountains of waters. Do you say there *could* be nothing more wonderful? In *this* day we have fountains of waters *inside* us. "The water that I shall give him shall be *in him* a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 14), rising up to its own level in heaven. You may say this Rev. vii. is a marvellous picture, but we have something in this day that transcends it altogether, because we *have* the Spirit of God, we *are* the children of God, we have the Good Shepherd, and are the sheep; and there is not a single thing that He can bestow upon us that He has not given us, and it would be casting a question on the perfectness of His love, if we thought He could do something more for us than He has done.

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd." The Lord refers to *us* "*must* bring." Don't you delight in that word *must*? It is a strong word of power, but it is a strong word of divine affection too. "Bring" them from *where*? From wherever their hiding-places are "I must bring them out," and He *has* "brought us to God." Think of it! Brought from the lowest depths of misery to those everlasting heights of blessing, from "beggars

from the dunghill" to "inherit the throne of glory." He has brought us to His own elevation. "As *He* is, so are we in this world." He says, "I take no refusal. Do not ask to stay in the world any longer; *I want you.* "And they shall hear my voice," and my voice shall teach other things that charmed them." Have you heard His voice?

"And there shall be one flock, and one shepherd." A company of sheep passing through every possible danger, with no outward fold, or wall, or organization of man to protect them. There is but one flock. You cannot divide it *before God*, though before man you may. In 1 Peter v. 2 we are told to "feed the flock of God which is among you." Look over them, and take care of them; don't disturb the sheep, but *feed* them, and "when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." I believe this is within the reach of all, if we seek to take care of one another, and help one another. An unfading crown of glory! *Think* of *such* an end! To go on through this world feeding the flock, giving them the food with heavenly freshness, building them up. Danger everywhere, and what do you want? You want the almighty, sheltering, watchful care of our Shepherd in heaven. Carry away with you this one thought—I have Someone in heaven who cares for me; my Saviour, my Lord, my Master in heaven *cares* for me. Oh that we may know more what it is to confide in His love! Every real Christian belongs to that one church, flock, and Shepherd. We are not to be looking one at another, but all looking to the Shepherd—looking for the eye of the Shepherd in heaven; and He says at the close, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall

any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all." Whatever difficulties may await you, or exercises, this we *do* know, that we have a Shepherd in heaven never failing us, ever ministering to us; and remember these three words, "*Greater than all.*" No man or power of the devil can take us out of the hand of Him that holds us for ever, and He is "greater than all." The Lord give us to treasure His word in our souls.

E. P. C.

"WIDOWS INDEED."

1 Tim. v.

The widow is often seen in Scripture as the object of the thoughts of God. But it is not until we come to the epistle to Timothy that we have the different kinds specified, with the indication of those who are widows according to the divine mind, those, in a word, who are really widows. Such the apostle directs Timothy, and us through Timothy, to honour, showing by the exhortation the place which they should ever occupy among the saints of God.

Three characteristics are given of the "widow indeed." She is "desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day." (*v.* 5.) A true widow, then, before God will exemplify these characters; and it is not a little remarkable that three widows are found in the gospel of Luke who exactly answer to the particulars of this description. The widow of Nain, whose son, "the only son of his mother," was being carried out for burial when met by our blessed Lord, as the Prince of Life, was truly the desolate one. (Chap.

vii.) The poor widow who cast in her two mites into the treasury, who "of her penury cast in all her living," was surely one who trusted in God. (Chap. xxi.) And in Anna we find the last characteristic; for it is said of her that "she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served [God] with fastings and prayers night and day." (Chap. ii. 37.) It is possible that each of these widows might have been a "widow indeed"—Anna certainly was—but in the way in which they are presented by the evangelist, it is the three together that answer to this character.

Spiritually, nothing could be more beautiful than the widow as so portrayed, though naturally the heart would shrink from it. But it must be remembered that the desolation, which is her essential feature, is only on the side of earth; nay, it might be added with perfect truth, that her very bereft condition has been the means, in the dealings of the God of all comfort, of her choicest blessing. It is precisely here where the application to the Church may be seen. It is when the Church realizes her widowhood, as far as earth is concerned, and in this aspect her desolation, as being without a single visible resource, that she enters most fully upon the enjoyment of the boundless affections of her Lord; and not only so, but thereby her entire dependence on Him would be consciously intensified, and out of this again would grow her continual supplications and prayers night and day. In the "widow indeed" we have a perfect picture (ideal because perfect) of the Church on earth. The characteristics given are moreover seen in our blessed Lord Himself. He was alone, had not where to lay His head, and none on earth had fellowship with Him; He trusted in God, and He was constantly occupied in

prayer. (Luke v. 12, 16, &c.) Every believer therefore should be thus distinguished, and will be in proportion as he is like his Lord.

The apostle having portrayed the true widow, supplies the contrast in the one "that liveth in pleasure," who "is dead while she liveth." Such an one is false to her character, denying that she is a widow, and using her lonely condition as an opportunity to gratify her inclinations and worldly desires, instead of hearing the voice of Him who speaks to her through her sorrows, as to Israel of old, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her." (Hosea ii. 13.) So living she is dead—dead toward God, in the midst of her pleasures. We have the counterpart of such a widow in the Apocalypse, together with the certainty of her coming doom. "How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, *I sit a queen, and am no widow*, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." (Rev. xviii. 7, 8.) Such is the doom of Babylon, which, while claiming to be the spouse of Christ, was nothing but an apostate harlot, who "was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornications." (Rev. xvii. 4.)

Further, the apostle gives directions as to the action of the assembly in relation to widows. It is very noteworthy that the first difficulty in the Church sprung up in connection with such. (See Acts vi. 1.) It shows

that they were a numerous class even in the Pentecostal Church; and it would seem, from the instruction given to Timothy, that a large number will always be found in fellowship with the saints of God. This is a blessed thought, revealing the beauty of God's ways, even as one of old has said, "God often dims the brightness of this world in order to attract the vision to the glory beyond." If therefore He makes a widow, it is that He might wean her from earth, and win her to Himself. But the point here is, that the widow in her needs might be an embarrassment to the Church. Hence the apostle commands that none should "be taken into the number under threescore years old," &c. (*vv.* 9, 10.) By this we understand, that only those who answer to the description here given were to be formally linked with the assembly; *i.e.* recognized as entitled to regular support. Others might of course be ministered to privately by the saints, or occasionally by the Church, but none but these were to be put down in the list of those who had undeniable claims upon the funds of the assembly. It would have saved the Church much perplexity if the wisdom of God, as here expressed, had governed in this particular. It will also be observed that age, in and by itself, does not give the needful qualification. She must not have been twice married, and she must be well reported of, both as to her home duties and as to her activities in the Lord's service. The character of her good works—works which are therefore according to the mind of God—might well be commended for consideration to many in a day like this of incessant and ever-increasing activity.

The younger widows are to be refused; *i.e.* we judge, not to "be taken into the number." The reason is given

"For when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry: having damnation [or being guilty] because they have cast off their first faith." Their "first faith" would probably mean that in the time of their bereavement, when the Lord drew them through their grief near to Himself, they devoted themselves entirely to Him and His service. But, losing heart for Christ, "they will"—or rather, they wish to—"marry," finding themselves unable in such a state of soul to lean for all the support they need on Christ; and thus they turn with longing desire to the succour of human affections and a human arm. An unsatisfied heart is the source of much sin, as the next verse most surely reveals. "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not," fruitful source of unhappiness and sorrow in the Church of God in every age and in every clime. The antidote is supplied. "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." (*v.* 14.) The term "younger women" is perhaps general, though with special reference to widows. The home is the appointed sphere of service for all such, if they would be in subjection to the Lord, and in comparative shelter from the snares of Satan. One other word is given to define the responsibilities of believers towards the widows of their own families, and this in order that the Church may be free to "relieve them that are widows indeed."

We may, then, gather from the consideration of this scripture some useful lessons. First we learn, as already expressed, what a heart God has for those who are truly

widows. Evidences of this are found both in the Old and New Testament Scriptures. It follows therefore, secondly, that if we would be in fellowship with Him, they should ever be the objects of our loving care and ministry. Lastly, we may gather from these directions to Timothy what an important sphere of service a "widow indeed" occupies before God. Anna is an example of this among the little remnant that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. In her continual fastings and prayers she had been brought into communion with the mind of God, while waiting for the advent of the Messiah. She was therefore led into the temple at the moment when the infant Jesus was being presented to Jehovah, and her heart was filled with joy, and her lips with praise; and she went forth as the messenger of the glad tidings of the Christ to those who had with her looked and longed for this blessed time. Where, then, are the "widows indeed" of the present day? Morally we occupy the same position as that of the little band in Jerusalem. Like them, we are expecting our Lord; meanwhile God calls those who are truly widows to be occupied with fasting and prayers, that thereby they may bear up the whole Church with their intercessions, aud thus be the means of kindling anew in many hearts the blessed hope of the Lord's return. There are many to serve in labours of love, but there is even a greater need for the service of those who, like Epaphras, know how to labour fervently for the saints in prayers. It is this service to which the "widows indeed" are called, and for which they have been divinely qualified. May the Church increasingly reap the fruit of their blessed service in this dark and evil day!

E. D.

THE CHURCH AS WIDOW AND BRIDE.

"He is not here. I will come again."

Mourning, she misses Him who is not here;
Joyous she waits until her Lord appear,
Watching through widowed hours till night be past,
Ready to raise the cry, "He comes at last."

Oh, blood-bought Church, unto thy Lord be true;
Wait for thine absent One the midnight through!
Glory awaits thee, glory all divine,
When thou shalt in His bright effulgence shine.

His constant care shall shield thy waiting hours,
His love thy solace be when tempest lowers;
Himself thine all—then that bright morning tide,
When He shall come to greet thee as His bride.

Mourn that so few His love, His beauty know;
Mourn o'er the many triumphs of the foe;
Mourn o'er each act that gives Him cause to chide;
Mourn when thou dost not in His love abide.

Rejoice, O Church! for perfect shalt thou be;
Rejoice, for 'tis *His* hand that mouldeth thee;
Rejoice in love as changeless as divine;
Rejoice that thou art His, that He is thine.

* * * * * *

Exultant Church, raise now thy song of praise,
And triumph with thy Lord in all His ways;
Absent or present, ever unto thee
His constant love, His deep desire, shall be.

Time hastens on, the midnight hour is past,
Even now the rays of coming morn are cast;
Thy widowed weeping shall be changed ere long
To morning praises and to bridal song.

a wicked person. "His sin was retained." Then grace worked in his soul, and he repented. The assembly, which had been slow to judge him, was now slow to forgive him; and their slackness becomes the occasion of the apostle's word in 2 Cor. ii., "Ye ought rather to forgive him, and to comfort him." Here we see an assembly forgiving sins. This clearly has nothing to do with the eternal forgiveness of Heb. x., which no sin in the saints can, thank God, disturb. Nor does it have anything to do with the restoration of the soul to communion with the Father. (1 John i.) But it has to do with bringing back the erring one into the communion of the saints on earth. He has been put out as a fornicator, and now he was forgiven; and he was no longer recognized as a wicked person, but as a saint—one of "ours." His sin was gone from the mind of the assembly by the act of the assembly. It is interesting to notice that the word used here is, freely or heartily forgiven,* the same as in Ephesians. Does not this speak of the perfect restoration of the poor sinner back amongst the company of those who themselves are but blood-washed sinners.

Now we see from this case at Corinth that in every act of restoration, as we commonly call it, there is the thought of the forgiveness of the sin for which the person has been put away. Restoration, in our ordinary sense, means that the assembly forgives the sin and receives back into its midst the repentant saint. In Scripture the word "restoration" is not used in this sense. We find it in Gal. vi. 1. The spiritual saints are told to restore in a spirit of meekness a man

* χαρίζομαι. The ordinary word translated forgive or remit is

who is overtaken in some offence. They are to bring him back into communion with God, and into happy working with the saints. This, I believe, is the force of the word here used.* It is a word applied to mending nets. (Matt. iv. 21.) The broken ends are joined and restored to their proper place and function in the whole. So with the failing saint as a member of the body of Christ. Excommunication is severance from that which on earth expresses the body of Christ. The one who has been "put out" needs to be brought in again, not merely readjusted, so to speak.

Finally we may notice that the thought of human forgiveness is really familiar to us all, and owned of God in the common relationships of life. "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." (Luke xvii. 3.) So, on the other hand, if I sin against my brother, I am bound to obtain his forgiveness; it is a point of godliness to do so. (Matt. v. 24.) The case stands, I believe, thus: First, if I have sinned against God only, I have to confess to Him and be forgiven, and He also practically cleanses in grace. Second, if my sin has been also against my brother, I must confess to him, and get his forgiveness, as well as confessing to God. Third, if my sin has been of such a character that it has been open wickedness, and brought what Scripture calls "leaven" into the loaf or assembly, I must get the forgiveness of the assembly as well as God's forgiveness. Discipline and excommunication most commonly precede this forgiveness by the assembly, and are the means used of God to produce that true self-judgment upon which forgiveness both from the Lord and His people depends. This we see

* καταρτίζω.

strikingly illustrated in the case at Corinth. (Compare 1 Cor. v. and 2 Cor. ii.) But there is no reason why repentance should not precede excommunication, in which case forgiveness might be granted without the putting away of the one who has sinned and repented.*

C. D. M.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

The epistle to the Colossians, as that to the Ephesians, was sent on its way by the hand of Tychicus, who was accompanied on his journey to Colosse by Onesimus. (Col. iv. 7–9.) We may suppose, then, these epistles to have been written at the same time. In both the apostle desires the prayers of the saints on his own behalf, that he might open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, as he writes in that to the Ephesians (vi. 19), and the mystery of the Christ, as he tells the Colossians. (iv. 3, 4.) It may be, as has been very generally believed, that the epistle to the Philippians was written at a subsequent time, when his imprisonment was drawing to a close; though when the apostle wrote to Philemon (22) he was evidently expecting his liberty at no distant date. The exact date of these letters it may be difficult to fix; but all may see that the letter to the Colossians is in some respects a counterpart of that to the Ephesians, and

* The doctrine of this paper will scarcely be disputed; but there might be a difference of judgment as to the mode in which "administrative" forgiveness should be exercised. While the authority may indeed be vested in, and exercised in humility by, those gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the assertion, or the proclamation of the possession of the authority, in the broken condition of the Church, might well raise many solemn questions.—[Ed.]

therefore may fitly be studied in connection with it. In the latter the Body of Christ is treated of at some length; in that to the Colossians, the fulness in Christ, who is the Head of the body, for all who are His is prominently set forth. Thus they go well together. And though for the most part in the ancient arrangement of the epistles of Paul that to the Philippians comes between them, in one uncial MS., the Codex Claromontanus, the epistle to the Colossians precedes that to the Philippians.

In common with that to the Romans, this letter was addressed to saints in a place in which Paul had not worked. (ii. 1.) The Church at Colosse—or Colasse, as some MSS. exhibit the name—was not founded by the apostle, but the instrument, it would seem, chosen of God to evangelize them was Epaphras, one of them, a servant of Christ (iv. 12), Paul's beloved fellow-servant, and their* faithful minister of Christ. (i. 7.) To us this is not only interesting, but especially instructive; for these saints, as Paul writes of them, are illustrations of the results that were to follow from the apostle's ministry, as detailed to him by the Lord Jesus Christ on the day of his conversion. Paul was to open eyes to turn people from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that such might receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Christ. (Acts xxvi. 18.) The condition in which he would find God's elect, and especially those of them among the Gentiles, with the blessings in which they were to share; viz., forgiveness of sins and the

* Several MSS. followed by Lachmann, Tregelles, and Alford, read "a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf." This is perhaps the more correct reading, Paul thus accrediting Epaphras' work at Colosse.

love to all the saints. For the Spirit, who dwells in all true Christians, does draw out the affections of the new man to all those who are God's. Here it was seen, and Paul discerned in their faith and love undoubted evidences of their real conversion, of which he had learnt from Epaphras, who had also manifested to him their love in the Spirit. Informed thus about them, his heart was drawn out in prayer on their behalf; for nothing short of their being filled with the full knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding could satisfy his desires for them. What these were he tells them. Praying thus for them in his prison at Rome, he wished them to know what he felt they needed, and what he asked of God on their behalf. By this means they might come to discern dangers to which they were exposed, and the wants which an apostle's eye could see were then requisite to be supplied. In what a gracious way does he instruct them? Who would be repulsed by it? Who would be chilled by it? Who would be offended at it? Paul in Rome, owning the common tie between them and him, thus prayed for those to whom he had not directly ministered the gospel of God. He was not content with telling them what he thought they lacked. He prayed for them first about it; and long ere his letter had reached them, his prayer had gone up to the throne of grace, that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will to walk worthy of the Lord unto all-pleasing. The disciples of Christ they were. Paul would have them walk worthy of Him who is in glory. Now this would be shown in increased [redacted]nitfulness and in endurance. C. E. S.

(*To be continued, D.V.*)

THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Notes of a reading on 2 Tim. ii.)

Paul begins by encouraging Timothy in his own service: "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." He was to endure hardness, and not to entangle himself in the affairs of this life. "The husbandman labouring *first*, shall be partaker of the fruits;" that is, he must labour before he gets the fruit. He is speaking of the ruin of the Church in chap. i.; but a person is to go on working, through grace, in all the circumstances in which he finds himself.

Verse 8. Two characters of the gospel—the accomplishment of the promises, and Christ raised from the dead. You get the same thing in Rom. i. 3, 4: He was the accomplishment of all the promises; the Jew has lost all *title* to them, and must come in in mercy like any other poor sinner. The promises to Moses were conditional, to Abraham unconditional.

Then he shows at the end of the chapter the state of things: "Foolish and unlearned questions avoid." (*v.* 23.) How from the beginning Satan wrought, or sought to work, by all these notions! Verse 19: Both sides of the seal, God's sovereign grace, and the responsibility side. You get the different stages of evil; in Jude they had "crept in," in the epistle of John they had "gone out." The "last days" (iii. 1) have come to a head now, and this is a warning how to act when that is the case. God has always trusted the blessing He has sent to *man*, and he has always failed. God's grace has gone on working all the time, and "*He* knoweth them that

are His." He "added to the Church daily such as should be saved"—made them manifest. While Paul was alive there was spiritual energy to detect these false brethren. False notions are learnt much more easily than the truth. The truth meets with the opposition of the flesh in us, whereas error meets with no resistance. You can learn Irvingism in a week, but it takes years to learn the truth; for the truth *sanctifies*, and if a person does not bow to that he does not get on. Verse 19: Two sides—godliness of walk in those who say they are Christians, that should accompany profession; and, on the other hand, they may be hidden among all these foolish people, but the *Lord* knows them.

Then you get the great house, and he calls upon Timothy to purge himself from the vessels to dishonour. It is not here the exercise of discipline (you get that elsewhere); but here a man is to purge himself, then he will be a vessel unto honour. Then he takes up another thing. It is not now all who profess as at the beginning; now open infidelity has come in; but then what he says is, "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, *with* them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." You must get this following godliness in every way, and do it *with* those who call on the Lord. When the Lord added daily to the Church such as should be saved, there was no need to pick and choose; but here evil has come in, and you have to try people. It may be very plain in some: "Some men's sins are open beforehand," &c. Sometimes it requires a good deal of grace to discover only a little grace in another. "Out of a pure heart" is the motives that govern a man; "a sound mind" is that he does not go after wild fanaticism, but is sober in his judgment about divine truth.

Till the disorder had come in I could not follow *this* order, for I should have nothing to purge myself from. All that God has established remains, and we must go on with it. The Church is still "the pillar and ground of the truth." Christendom is not, though in a certain sense it is; for it maintains outwardly the profession of Christ's name, and while it does that the Holy Ghost has not left it. Philadelphians are those who keep the word of Christ's patience, and are looking for Him. The thing is to keep fast hold of what *does* remain, though we have lost a good deal. Here "calling on the name of the Lord" is not sufficient. I have to see who is trying to walk "out of a pure heart." The directions of God are as distinct in this ruin as when there was no ruin at all.

Chap. iii. 14: "Knowing of whom thou hast learned them." I know whom I have learned them from—Paul, or Peter, or John, &c.; that is, when the nominal church is all gone into confusion, then I get the word of God which remains. In chap. ii. I find directions for personal conduct, in chap. iii. what they are based upon—the Scriptures. People talk about "the fathers." Were they from "the beginning"? I ask. No; but from near it. Very well then, I can't have anything that did not come from "the beginning." Christ never can be unfaithful to His saints, and He is just as sufficient for *these* times as for those times. All that is in the Word remains; it is not that organization remains as it ought; that may go, but none of this can go. And there is another thing connected with it—it is never promised that miraculous works should continue. But in Eph. iv. gifts are not spoken of as coming from the *Holy Ghost*, but you get what are edification—gifts there, and

they will endure "*till* we all come," &c., and that is never said of miraculous gifts such as tongues and healing. You never find the apostles healing any of their own *friends* who were sick: "Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." This very Timothy was to use a little wine for his often infirmities. But when it was a testimony to the Lord, you get all these miracles wrought; but where it was not for that, you do not find them at all. In Eph. iv. the gifts are spoken of as coming from *Christ*, because it was not merely power; for a person, as to the gifts that are lost, might have power and not exercise it at all, not speaking with tongues for example. There was positive action of the Holy Ghost, and not allowed to be used. But where *Christ* gives, He gives what will endure "*till* we all come," &c. He cannot desert His Church. It is of all moment to have the conviction that Christ, because of His holy, blessed nature, cannot fail the saints to give all that is needed for their blessing in walking down here. You never find the "us" dropped in Scripture: "They went out from *us*, but they were not of *us*." You still get the saints corporately. The "us" are people walking in faith, charity, peace, out of a pure heart, walking *together*. If there was not the corporate unity, there could not be anything from which to apostatize. There are special blessings attached to the fellowship of the saints which cannot apply to an individual.

"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake." (*v.* 10.) Paul was saying there almost what Christ did; he was a witness, but it was a great deal to say. He must live for himself with Christ, to be able thus to live for the saints. Chap. iii. 17: "That the man of God may

be *perfect;*" that is, full-grown. I am not a full-grown man in Christ till I realize what Christ is.

Well, with a little patience in trusting Christ, all goes on very simply; I do not mean to say without trial. Things are very much more *moral* than people think; seeing clearly, and all that, depends on the state of the soul. J. N. D.

MALVERN, 1880.

REALITY.

ACTS v. 1–11.

IT is no light matter, but serious and solemn in the extreme, as well as most blessed, to have to do with God, to be brought near to Him, to stand in the relationship of a child, and to be the object of His unchanging favour. It is to be feared that there are many who, while gladly appropriating to themselves all the blessings of such a position, have yet but a very feeble sense of the responsibility it entails. They have never yet apprehended the truth that God will not be mocked, and that, being what He is, He must have reality in those who draw near to Him. He has been sought by such, not for what He is, but merely for what He can give, and hence they have no sense of the deep blessedness of His presence; they have never known what it is to be at home with Himself, to find it enough to sit before Him.

Reader, have you known what it is to be *alone* with God—to isolate yourself for a moment, however brief, from the busy throng around, and from the crowd of circumstances in which you live—to be really alone with Him, and not only there without one fear or doubt, but to find your soul filled and satisfied with a sweetness

and a blessedness that you know and experience, but cannot express in words; for human language fails to convey what the Spirit-taught soul alone can understand or enjoy? To taste it in any little measure involves two things which, though distinct, ought never to be separated—the drawing out of the affections, and the exercise of the conscience. He whose affections are most drawn out will be the one whose conscience will be most deeply and healthily exercised; for there will be, in that case, nothing of the spirit of the legalist, who thought of what I *must* or I *ought*, but only what will suit and please the One that has got my heart.

There are many, it is to be feared, who do not wish to get too near to the blessed Lord, who would not care for the place of the beloved disciple—leaning on His bosom (John xiii. 23)—but who would find themselves more at home and less constrained with the servants of the high priest. (Luke xxii. 54–60.) And yet who would deny that the greatest nearness means the greatest blessedness? and that the Giver must of very necessity be far better than His gifts? And if the thoughts and purposes, the ways, and works, and actings of God, be so wonderful and glorious, what must He Himself be when revealed in His own essential blessedness? and if the soul does but apprehend, however feebly, something of what He is, how can it do otherwise than desire to be near Him? It is an immense thing to know something of the heart of God, to know His own eternally-formed and unalterable purpose to bless us, and to be able to measure every circumstance in our history by a love that will never give us up, but that will, in spite of our-[redacted], turn everything to account, and thus make all [redacted]work together for our good.

Man's thought of blessing is too often limited to mere earthly things, while in reality all true blessing consists in knowing God, being acquainted with Himself. Reader, do you *know* Him, more intimately than any earthly friend, so that your soul expands in His presence, a presence that to you brings no constraint, but only fills you with untold blessedness? Such blessedness as this is all unknown by those who allow themselves in anything that will not do for the Lord, and who imagine that words, mere empty words without corresponding acts, that profession without practice, that truth in the head without reality in the heart, will do for Him who is also the Holy and the True, and who cannot therefore tolerate what is inconsistent with the deep perfections of His being, while the more His presence is realized and manifested, the more intolerant is He of all evil—that is to say, of everything that is opposed to His nature.

The scripture at the head of this paper is a solemn instance of the holy government of God upon persons who had been guilty of no gross outward sin, but who sought to earn a character for greater devotedness than they really possessed. They presumed upon the forbearance of God, and imagined that He would take no notice of an unreality and a false profession of which their fellows knew nothing, but which was only most hateful to Him, to whom indeed—for He was present there—they had lied. They had brought but a part of the proceeds of the sale, while falsely pretending they were offering the whole, and God being there, their sin was exposed at once, and met with immediate judgment; for He could not be mocked with impunity. If His presence is less realized now in the assembly, and

His forbearance more manifested, it is well to remember that His nature is unchanged, and though His power in government may not be displayed in so *public* a manner as it was in the above-noted instance, yet He can never give up what is due to Himself, and will most surely, sooner or later, unless it be truly repented of, visit in His holiness every act of unreality, and all mere empty profession, with the chastisement it deserves.

Unreality is the sure sign either of ignorance, indifference, or inertness of soul. It tells the sad and solemn tale, that he who bears its mark has not responded to the goodness of God, and that all the blessings so lavishly bestowed upon him have failed to awaken that holy and healthful gratitude which always proclaims its existence by the inquiry, How can I now please the One that has so loved and favoured me?

When the truth that is professed produces no corresponding result in the soul, when the words spoken remain but words, and have never been clothed with life and made good in acts, there a hardening process soon begins to manifest itself; the conscience becomes less sensitive, while the affections are less drawn out. The crust of profession may yet remain, but when such a soul is approached by others who may have less intelligence but more spiritual energy, less knowledge but more communion, the hollowness and emptiness are painfully felt.

Unreality is one of the most terrible weapons in the armoury of Satan. It dishonours the Lord; it degrades the testimony; it exposes the saint that is marked by it to the scorn and derision of the world; it awakens in every true-hearted believer the feelings of sorrow

and shame, while others only too gladly shelter themselves under its example. The spiritual perceptions are dulled, the conscience no longer in healthy exercise, the whole man (spiritually) is paralyzed and rendered incapable of forming a right judgment in any matter that may arise touching the Lord's interests. Reader, beware of unreality.

If there are some that cannot but be conscious of the distance there is between their profession and their practice, it must not be forgotten that there are many whose unreality, while patent to others, is all unknown to themselves; for it proceeds, not from the deliberate allowance of anything unsuited to the truth professed, but from ignorance or inertness of soul. Many a one in this state only needs to have the failure pointed out in order to act differently. There are some simple souls that are ignorant of the fact that the Holy Ghost has by the two great apostles, Paul and Peter, given very distinct directions as to the attire of women, while the whole Scripture abounds in general exhortations against conformity to the world. It is a solemn thing for such as know these truths, that profess too to have died to the world, to go up to meet the Lord and commemorate His death, and *there*, at such a time, to appear in His very presence in the trappings of that world, the silken chains of that slavery, to deliver from which the Lord of life and glory had gone to the cross and the grave. (Gal. i. 4.)

Many can speak freely of a "blessed hope," "a heavenly citizenship," and "an object for the heart," in a way that only makes others wonder at the incongruity between their words and their ways. Others again will boast of being on "the only right ground," and of having

"come out to Christ," while all they have done has been to make Him the professed standard of their *ecclesiastical* separation, and of that alone. In every thing else His claims are disallowed, and hence when the time of trial comes what is due to Him as the Head is also refused.

In whatever form unreality may be manifested, differing too as it does in various cases, both in its extent and immediate cause, yet it may all and always be traced back to this root—that it has not been *the habit of soul to walk with God*, to bring everything into the light of His presence, and to get His thoughts about the simplest of the every-day matters of life. No doubt he who does so will suffer in the flesh, which must be refused and disallowed if he would please the Lord; but, on the other hand, he will know the exceeding compensation of having the Lord's approval of his ways.

If God bring us near to Himself, it can only be to bless us, and this in a manner worthy of Himself, while those who acknowledge how richly He has blessed us for eternity, will surely not venture to say He is any less able or willing to bless us here in time. But the blessing must be in His own way, and that is ever perfect; while if any refuse it unless it comes to them in *their* way, not in *His*, yet will He seek and also find objects upon whom He can expend all the love of His heart, all the fulness of His blessing.

Reader, has He found such an one in you? and is it the settled purpose of your heart to walk with Him, and only and in all things to please Him? "Enoch walked with God, and he was not: for God took him," and "he had this testimony, that he pleased God." (Gen. v. 24; Heb. xi. 5.) F. S. M.

"TRAINED" AND "ARMED."

GENESIS xiv. 14–18.

WHEN by any special assault of the enemy he succeeds in turning aside from the right path any of God's people, and they fall into his hand, there is a special lesson to be learnt by those who are preserved—a lesson directly *for* them, and *from* God Himself. Up to that time God has been dealing in admonition and warning with those now gone astray, who, refusing to hear any of His counsel, are finally allowed of Him to fall into the snare of the enemy, and God's dealing with *them* is thereafter after another sort and manner entirely. But for those who are left, with whom the warnings and admonitions and *love* of His heart and hand are thenceforward occupied, it is for them to profit withal by what has passed, and what they have seen as to the enemy, and as to the *points* whereby their brethren have fallen, an easy prey to him.

Any deliberate course of self-will must end for any of us in the discipline of His hand. This is true for an individual as well as for the Church. We cannot too often be reminded of this. He is a "jealous God," and "what a man soweth, that shall he also reap." We are HIS, and "love is strong as death, jealousy cruel as the grave." (Cant. viii.) He will share it with none; and surely we love to think of Him thus! "My beloved is *mine*;" and if a believer, I can say also, weak, worthless as I am, "I am His;" for He says so. The heart delights to ponder on it, and will throughout all eternity; for *love* is exclusive. But let us remember the *cost*—

not now the cost to Him, the cross was the measure of *that;* but what is involved as to *us*—the cost to us. After all it is but the giving up (is it gladly?) of what Paul designates as "dross and dung." (Phil. iii.) It is the counting up in the light of eternity of all that we have and all that we are on earth, according to the direction which He gives us in Luke xiv. 25–35.

Mark then, in Gen. xiv. 14–18, the moral of the lesson which was proposed, and which is sufficiently simple for any babe in Christ to understand, though we shall see the same principle is true also in other instances. None can encounter the enemy without defeat except the *trained* and *armed* man. "Abram *armed* his *trained* servants," and conquered the enemy. We are expected not to be overcome, but to be "overcomers" (Rev. ii. iii.), whatever the power, and malice, and subtlety of the enemy may be, in a warfare not now natural; for "we wrestle not against flesh and blood," but against spiritual wickedness, "wicked spirits in high places."

Had Abram engaged in conflict with the enemy without having ready servants trained to bear arms, the probability is that he and they too would have been overcome. But they were both *trained* and also *armed.* The first supposes a lengthened and varied disciplinary exercise in the house, the last the suited weapons of offence and defence for the occasion. All of these Lot was deficient in. At ease and settled *here,* he dreamt of no enemy, and so was taken unawares, and found defenceless. The discipline of Abram's house, may we not say, was unknown in the house of Lot, and mark the sure result.

No, my brother in the Lord, you are never to relax;

never to forget, on the one hand, your pilgrim and stranger calling, nor, on the other, the discipline of your own house in accordance with the fact that the enemy is around. The time is coming when this day-drill and the armour of defence against him, so necessary to you now, and the given resistless sword of offence, will both be laid aside; but it is not yet. You are "*called* to be a soldier;" but what is an untrained soldier, and one without armour, without arms?

I believe then the especial want of Christians in the present day is to be *trained* and "*armed*," and more especially so in reference to our own recent trials God would bring this, I believe, before us. The training, the armour, the arms, then what are they for us? And I ask my own heart, as I see some have been carried away by the enemy, Do I possess these? And I ask, Have *you* this daily discipline and arms, so that you are not in danger of being also presently carried away by some other similar device of the same enemy? This is the question for us. We must see to it that we are armed. For, need I ask, was Lot? Need I say that all Christians are not? The Ephesians are exhorted to *take* the whole armour of God by the apostle Paul, and the saints also to arm by the apostle Peter: "Forasmuch as Christ also hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind." (1 Peter iv.) And wherefore these exhortations, if all are already thus armed? And this brings before us the key to the whole matter? One has trodden this earth before us to whom Peter refers, and never did the enemy for a moment get an advantage over Him, or turn Him aside from a right path. We are to be armed with *the same mind*. What mind that was, seen so unfalteringly in Him, Phil. ii.

unfolds to us. He would obey, and He would *serve*. He would only do the will of God, and this necessitates in all of us a continued path of going down. Remember that it is only in your going down that you can follow Him, or that God can be exalted; for the old man and the new cannot be exalted together. Only in the giving up of *my* will am I like Christ, nor like Him wholly even then; for He did *God's* will, and both must be there if I am fully to follow Him; that is, if I am to be armed at this special moment both to recover my brother, or to be myself preserved from joining him, and sharing with him in his captivity.

What was it in our beloved brethren that turned them aside? Where did the enemy get an advantage over them? Was it worldliness, or pride, or envy, or the ten thousand other snares he employs? These are questions difficult to answer, but questions which we *must* answer if we are to profit by the discipline of God's hand at this moment; for you do not arm against a danger you are ignorant of, and remember *we* are not armed if these things are allowed in us, and, alas! we too may then be carried away captive by the same enemy at any moment.

I pause, before looking at one or two passages of Scripture, to reply to a remark I have heard. It is this: "But was not the professing Church carried away by the enemy soon after the apostles?" I admit it. And was not Lot similarly carried away a captive to his own will, and so in the hands of the enemy (though doubtless unknown to himself) long before the occasion we have read together in chap. xiv.? He made a deliberate choice of what was easiest to nature in chap. xiii. But there came a special time of trial to Lot and his house

which brought it all out, and it was not the first; and so God does allow these special trials to come, when the enemy puts forth a special effort, and through one of these trials He has seen fit in His wisdom (*and for our blessing, if we take heed thereto*) recently to pass us. May God enable us to profit by this moment, and may its lessons never be lost upon us!

Allow me now to show you a similar instruction from the book of Judges. Israel is in an evil state, under the oppression of Midian and Amalek. Gideon (chap. vi.), by whom God would help them, must be himself, and his house also, in a moral condition suited to God, and in contrast with that of the people; that is, he must himself be trained and armed. His father and his father's house had fallen under the enemy, and were worshippers of Baal. First he humbles himself and takes the place of being "*least* in his father's house," then erects an altar to the true God, then throws down his father's altar of Baal, and cuts down the grove that was by it, offering sacrifice to God alone; and only after all this does God use him to overcome the host of Midian (chap. vii.) Others may be found in the Old Testament; but to come to the New, a similar line of truth is found in Paul's address to the elders at Ephesus. (Acts xx.) About to be taken from them, when they would have no longer his counsel to guide them, his advice to them is, "Take heed unto *yourselves*." They must discipline *themselves*, and thus be trained, and he would arm them in view of those solemn times of difficulty which he saw approaching for the Church, when they would have to stand alone against the enemy; and it is thus also that he addresses Timothy. (2 Tim.)

TRUE MINISTRY.

ONE scarcely knows the history of what is called the Church, of what is the Church as to its responsibility, nor the ways of the clergy and indeed of all. We are happy to have only the Word to follow, and to know that it is the word of God. What an immense blessing to have *His* word, the revelation of His grace towards us, of Christ the perfect One, of the counsels of God, and what God has ordained for our glory. It is in His kindness towards us that, in the ages to come, He will show forth the immense riches of His grace.

From the beginning, trusting the enemy rather than God, man alienated himself from God, and the two questions: Where art thou? What hast thou done? showed where man had got to. Responsibility completely tested until the rejection of Christ; then, God glorified in righteousness, His love, and the counsels of His grace from before the foundation of the world have been manifested. That puts the gospel in a very special place, and then shows the relations of responsibility and sovereign grace with great distinctness.

More than this, on the glory of God there is no longer any veil. Henceforward His wrath is revealed from heaven; but also the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, the witness that all the sins of those who see it are removed from before God; then, all that God is morally is fully revealed and established. We know Him according to that glory, and our re-

lations with God, our standing before God, are founded upon it. We are transformed from glory to glory according to that image, for we can look at it. It is the proof of our redemption, and the proof that our sins no longer exist before God. We are also renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created us; we are created according to God in righteousness and holiness of truth; for, according to that glory, He hath shined in our hearts in order to set forth this glory of Christ in the world. The Christian is like a lantern: the light is within, but for the purpose of shining out; but dim glasses (the flesh if it interferes) will prevent the light from shining forth as it should. Thus that which is given us becomes the occasion of inward exercise; the treasure is in an earthen vessel, and this must be only a vessel. We must be dead in order that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal body.

It is not only a communication of what is in Christ as knowledge; but if it is real we drink of that which makes the river. It is a communication which exercises the soul, makes it grow, and judges the flesh in all things in order that we may not mar the testimony which is thus committed to us. In Christ Himself the life was the light of men, and the light which we receive must become life in us, the formation of Christ in us, and the flesh must be held in death. "Death worketh in us," says Paul, "but life in you."

This is the history of ministry, of true ministry. That which we communicate is our own; it enlightens us, but it works in us morally. The glory of Christ is realised in us, and all that does not suit Him is judged. Now flesh never suits Him.

time. And the reason assigned for His place in the universe as man is, that by Him all things were created in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him, and for Him, and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. Such is His place in relation to creation; such, too, is His history in relation to it in the past, the present, and the future. By Him all things were created. By Him all things consist. He upholds all things by the word of His power. For Him too they were all created. So one can understand that the Creator and upholder of all things, and He who is before all things, should not enter the ranks of His creatures and become a man without having the position in creation and the title of the Firstborn. Next we learn of another Headship with which He is invested. He is the Head of the Body the Church, who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. His place as Firstborn in the ranks of creatures tells us of His incarnation. His title as Firstborn from the dead reminds us necessarily of His cross and resurrection. As risen He is in the relationship of Head of the Body the Church, the beginning too of a new order of things, of which those redeemed by His blood form part, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence, and this pre-eminence He must have, because in Him all the fulness was pleased to dwell.

The Firstborn then, in a double sense, Firstborn of all creation and Firstborn from the dead, before all, upholding all, and in all things to have the pre-eminence, such is the One into whose kingdom we are trans-

lated, and who has redeemed us by dying on the cross. He to whom this pre-eminence belongs has entered the ranks of creatures. But in what condition was creation found? In what condition were men proved to be when He became incarnate? Things in heaven and things on earth needed to be brought into order. Men needed to have the enmity of the heart removed. Both these are effected by His cross. All the fulness is pleased to reconcile all things to itself, things in heaven and things on earth, having made peace by the blood of His cross. This we wait to see effected by the exercise of sovereign power. Men, however, have been reconciled to God in the body of Christ's flesh through death. Of this the Colossian saints were an illustration, and such will be presented holy, unblameable, and unreproveable in God's sight, if they continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which those saints had heard, and which was preached in the whole creation under heaven, of which Paul was made a minister.

The necessity for the Lord's incarnation and death is thus clearly brought out. Creation as well as man is concerned in it, though as yet the former has reaped no beneficial results from it. But saints in Christ Jesus are already reconciled to God, and have forgiveness of their sins, with the sure prospect of sharing in the kingdom when it shall be established in power. A ministry therefore was needed to proclaim the gospel, and to teach saints full Christian truth; for continuance in the faith, grounded and settled, is what is pressed on all. Now such a ministry God provided, and Paul was an example of it. He was a minister of the gospel, and a minister of the Church to complete the

word of God, by bringing out the mystery hid from ages and generations, but now made manifest to God's saints, to whom He would make known what is the wealth of the glory of it among the Gentiles, even Christ in them the hope of glory, whom Paul preached, admonishing every man, and teaching every man, in all wisdom, that he might present every man perfect; *i.e.* full-grown in Christ. Hence he addresses the Colossian saints, and ministers of Christ to them, desiring that they in common with all believers should have their hearts encouraged, they being knit together in love, and unto all the wealth of the full assurance of understanding to the full knowledge of the mystery of God,* in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Nothing then can surpass in knowledge what this mystery unfolds. It tells us of Christ, of God's counsels about Him as Head over all things, the whole inheritance put under Him, and a Body provided for Him, which is the Church of the living God.

Now lest any should beguile them with enticing words, he earnestly exhorts them, that as they had received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, so they would walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith as they had been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. (ii. 6, 7.) Various devices of the enemy to corrupt the faith the apostle was acquainted with. Some of them he will specify; but before doing that he makes very plain that he knew no theory of development which, commencing with Christ,

* MSS. vary in the text they here present, and the judgment of critics likewise. The right reading is probably either "the mystery of God," as Gb. Sch. Alf. adopt, or "the mystery of God, even Christ," as La. Tis. Tre. adopt on the authority of the *Codex Vaticanus*. The doctrine is the same whichever of these two readings is preferred.

would perfect saints by something else above and beyond Him. The Colossians were to be both rooted and built up in Him, and firmly settled in the faith as they had been taught; for all the faith was now revealed, since the word of God was completed. Now this does not mean that revelation was exhausted, but that the outline of God's revealed mind for His people was now completed since the mystery of God was now disclosed. And further, taught about Christ, thanksgivings should characterize them. In each chapter is this insisted on. (i. 12; iii. 15, 16; iv. 2.)

The apostle now specifies certain snares to which the saints were exposed, opposed to full Christian teaching, and ruinous to souls; viz., philosophy (8), Judaizing teaching (16), and Gnostic reveries (18), the touchstone for the detection of each of them being teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. That applied, the evil would be discerned. Philosophy was according to the traditions of men, according to the elements or rudiments of the world; *i.e.* principles on which the world was sought to be ordered. This was not after Christ. A short but forcible statement which would readily put godly souls on their guard. Would philosophy hold out the hope of its votaries attaining to a fulness of understanding to which ordinary men were strangers? Would it allure them by the hope of soaring to heights, otherwise incapable of being reached, and which left the crowd far below them? All such delusive prospects only manifested most clearly that it was not after Christ; "for in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and Christians "are filled full in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power." (10.) Simple truth as to His person, and as to His position, would

effectually guard obedient hearts from being ensnared by such delusions.

Would the airy, dreamy speculations of men, the workings of the human mind, unenlightened by or certainly not in subjection to divine revelation, hold out promises of deliverance from sin and from the world? Christians had in, and with Christ, but a Christ who had died and had risen, what met their condition, and provided a position before God and the world, and a standing too before God. All that they wanted they had already. As to their condition, they were in Christ circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. (11.) As to their position, they were buried with Him in baptism, wherein also they were raised with Him through faith of the operation of God, who raised Him from the dead. (12.) As regards their standing, formerly dead in offences and the uncircumcision of their flesh, they were quickened together with Christ, and all their offences forgiven. Further, by His cross the full need of the Jew was met as much as that of the Gentile. Principalities and powers too, stripped of their prey, were led in triumph, proofs of His complete and abiding victory. What could philosophy, even if allied with Judaism, offer in comparison with all this? It might promise a great deal, but only on condition of its adherents sedulously pursuing the study of it. Christianity left it far in the background. The student of philosophy might hope to acquire much by effort and protracted labour. The Christian, as in Christ, and as associated with Him, had all that has passed before us. What fulness could philosophy open up compared with the truth about Him in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily? On

what heights could it plant its votaries, as compared with Christians being in Christ, who is the head of all principality and power? To state this should be enough for a subject mind.

Would Judaism prove a snare, bringing into bondage to its observances those who were never put by God under law? A religion of ordinances is often attractive. Now it was true that the injunctions about new moons and sabbaths, and regulations about meats and drinks, were from God, and were really shadows of things to come. The body however, of which they were true shadows, is of Christ. Correct then as they were as shadows, delineating truth about Him who has come, they could not even foreshadow all that He is. Judaism could never present to those who were nurtured in it the full truth about Christ. "The body is of Christ." How souls would lose if they turned to that! There is in Christ what is positive, substantial, and full; and since Judaism could present but the shadow of things to come, why turn to the shadow after the substance has appeared? C. E. S.

(To be continued, D.V.)

DEPARTED LEADERS.

THE apostles had no successors. Both Paul and Peter alike, in the prospect of their own departure, commended the saints—the former to God, and the word of His grace (Acts xx. 32); the latter to the written Word. (2 Peter i. 15.) It has been the same in principle with the vessels of testimony of every age. They have lived and served, and have departed to be with Christ. We are left; and what, we ask, is the light in which they should now be regarded? The word of God supplies

the answer. (See Heb. xiii. 7.) We are, in the first place, to remember those who have been our leaders, and who have spoken unto us the word of God; and, secondly, "considering the end of their conversation," we are to "imitate their faith." When bereft therefore of any to whom God had especially committed His testimony in a dark and evil day, the Holy Spirit would lead out our affections in divine channels. And it is a consolation, a divine solace, to be directed to remember such eminent servants of the Lord, and to recall their faith, both as an incentive and an example. To do so in this spirit will obviate the danger of human idolatry, and enable us to glorify God in the energy, the courage, the consecration and zeal, which they displayed.

In this connection, moreover, we are told—and it may be as comprising the faith of these departed teachers—that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." They may disappear from the scene, but He abides, and abides as our unchanging and unchangeable resource. Amid all our vicissitudes, and even amid all our failures and unfaithfulness, if our hearts are but stayed on this blessed truth, we need never be discouraged or disheartened. Christ remains, and here we can rest. He is ever the same, and He will never cease to care for His Church. What comfort to us in our conscious weakness! and what an antidote to our apprehensions, and to our craving after visible helps! Nor let us forget that His truth is bound up with His immutable character. We must not therefore be carried about with divers and strange doctrines. When standard-bearers fall, it is but a summons to us to hold fast all the more tenaciously the testimony they proclaimed. "Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Rev. iii. 11.)

E. D.

CHRIST DEPARTING TO THE FATHER.

JOHN xiii.

THIS chapter begins the communications of the Lord as regards His going away. In the previous chapters we have had the account of His ordinary ministry, and statements of the glory of His person, the power of the divine life come into the world, and light too. All that had been gone through, and then in chaps. viii. ix. you get the rejection of His word and works. Chap. x. is a statement of what the real purpose of His coming was—to get out His sheep. "He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." In spite of all opposition, He could not be hindered from having His sheep. It is our heavenly portion in contrast with the fold. The "porter"—God in His prophets, opening the door. He did come in at the door, born at Bethlehem in the appointed way, and then He *becomes* the door to anybody else. He had come in in God's way according to prophecy; but any who come in by Him "go in and out and find pasture," perfect liberty, not shut up as in a prison, but the Shepherd's care instead of the prison-fold. There they were, saved by Him, and God's pastures to feed upon.

That closed what He was doing on earth, and what He was bringing them into—heavenly blessedness. Then the hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father. He was come there to be put to death, so that all through these chapters He is looked at as actually gone. Having shown that the Jews would not receive this light of

life, they remained in darkness of course. He was putting before His sheep much better things. Now that He comes to the point that He was actually going away, He takes up the heavenly things to which He had gathered these poor sheep, and unfolds them in chap. xiii.

In the gospel of John the *blood* of Christ is not the subject, though we cannot think too much of it, and that is the reason it is said in the epistle, "This is He that came by water and blood;" not merely by water that purifies and cleanses, but by the blood too that expiates. The cross was the absolute wickedness of man, hating Christ who had come in love, God having displayed Himself in all Christ's walk on earth; it revealed God, and they could not stand that. It is not only that man has been turned out of the garden of Eden on account of his sins, but man has turned God out of the world when He came in grace. In this chapter we find it is water spoken of, the practical purifying of man's heart. There is no repetition of the blood, but there is of the water. To have the work done that clears our sins the blood must be shed. Nothing ever showed what sin was as much as Christ's death did; He was sweating as it were great drops of blood only at the *thought* of going through it.

The point here is, that He was going to His Father. The Father had put all things into His hands, and He came from God and went to God; and the question necessarily was with the disciples, How could He be with them or they with Him? It looked like giving them up, and so He presses upon them His unalterable love; *nothing* stopped it, He went perfectly on till everything was done, and everything done that would

bring us into the same place He was in. After His resurrection He sends Mary Magdalene to say what was never said before: "Go tell my *brethren* I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." "Looking at God in His holy righteousness, you are before Him just as I am; looking at Him in the Father's love, you are before Him just as I am." And in John xvii.: "Hast loved them as thou hast loved me." A wonderful word, beloved friends; but that is where we are brought, and that is what Christ does, and it is well to have it thoroughly before our souls in thankfulness for this love. "Peace I leave with you," a peace made at the cross. When the world gives, it gives away; that is, it has not got it any more. But Christ never gives in that way; if He gives us His glory He does not lose any of it Himself. He puts us into the same place with Himself. What the Lord was telling them about was that He was going up on high to God. He "came from God" in all His absolute purity, and "He went to God" in the same holiness in which He came from Him.

They were sitting at the evening meal. It is not that supper was now ended, but it was going on. They were sitting together, and He gets up from supper; that is, from association with His disciples in this world—He among them, and they with Him. He had been among them as one that served; they had been with Him day by day, and seen the gracious condescension of His ways, and it is well to see it, and eat the bread of God which came down from heaven. But if He is going to God, and the Father has given everything into His hand, there is an end of His service, they thought. "No," He says; "I am not going to give up this

service," so He gets up, and girds Himself, lays aside His garments; that is, sitting at ease in this world. "I have done with that," He says; "*but I have not done with service.*"

I have spoken of the blood as the basis. If the Lord Jesus could not stay with them down here, they must be fit practically (down here on the earth, I mean) to be with Him in God's presence. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." He could not have a part with them any more. The world had rejected Him, and in that sense He had rejected the world, except to gather souls out of it. "I cannot have a part with you, and now the thing is for you to have a part with me." Here it is having a man in a fit state for communion with God in His own holiness. And that is the question for the Christian every day. If I have not light, the sin is not on my conscience. *God* may see failure, but (speaking of our walk) He is looking at our walk according to the light we have. He chastens us that we may be "partakers of His holiness." There is no measure of holiness for our hearts but God Himself. To be in the presence of God without a jar between us and Him—we come short of it, I know—that puts an end to all perfection here. It will be perfect in glory; "holy and without blame before Him in love." There is no other kind of holiness, and Christ in glory is the expression of that. "We all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." In contemplating, looking at, dwelling on, Christ, you get every day more like Him. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him: for

we shall see Him as He is." The Christian's eye has been opened on the blessedness of *Christ;* he knows he is to be perfectly like Him by-and-by, and he wants to be as much like Him now as he can. "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy Word is truth." That is the means God employs—the Scriptures. "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." He has set Himself apart—the model Man—that the Holy Ghost may take of the things of Christ, and make us like Him. That's where the Christian is who is in earnest; and now his heart wants the holiness. I press that. As regards acceptance, you are in as much acceptance as Christ is, because you are "accepted in the Beloved." We are in this new place before God (not our bodies yet, of course). Real, true holiness is based on the fact that the question of guilt is settled. But here we soon find out from day to day if things are going on rightly. We come then, besides that, to go through the practical realization of it day by day, to be as like Christ as we can.

He was going up into heaven; how would He do the service up there? "If I don't do it," He says, "you will never be able to be up there with me." He takes the form of a servant, then Peter says to Him, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me." We get the truth from it as we often do from Peter's haste (right feeling of respect for the Lord too). But this is the great point of the chapter. If He did not wash them clean enough as to water merely—not blood here—they could not have a part with Him; He must make them fit for the place He was going to be in. If the guilt is not put away, and we not purified, we are undone. Then Peter says,

"ONE THING I KNOW."

A MAN, born blind, had just been cured in a very remarkable way by the Lord, and had consequently been made the witness of His power. The eyes, which had been hitherto sealed, now spoke volumes! They became a silent yet mighty proof of the more than human power of the despised Jesus of Nazareth. The water of Siloam's pool removed at once the clay and the blindness. Marvellous water! But "*Siloam*" is by interpretation "*sent*." This water was the first thing seen; then perhaps the sky, then the city of Jerusalem; and then he hurried home to show himself to his parents.

The neighbours flock together. They ask him how his eyes had been opened. He replies, in all simplicity, "A man called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and received sight." All plain enough; but the mention of the name of Jesus destroyed the miracle. An explanation had to be received, therefore, from the Pharisees, the resolvers of the religious difficulties of that day. These speedily discovered that the cure, which itself was indubitable, had been effected on the sabbath, and they were accordingly furnished with a charge of sin against the blessed Healer. But where was the sin? Did it consist in "doing good on the sabbath-day"? "Doing good" cannot be committing sin. Again, as in the former case, the stigma attached to Jesus. However, the affair had become public; for, next, "the Jews did

not believe that he had been blind." The parents were therefore called to identify their son; but even they refused to confess how the cure had been wrought. Thus again the difficulty connected itself with the Healer.

Lastly, the man must fight the battle alone. His enemies bid him give the praise to God; for, they say, "we know that this man is a sinner." Now, to give praise to God for such mercy would assuredly have been the delight of his soul; but how could he deny facts? And the fact was that he had been cured of lifelong blindness by Him whom they called a sinner! He doubtless perceived that they aimed at his denial of Christ, or at least that he should share their wicked thoughts of Him. They endeavoured to make him defend a position he had never surveyed. This he refused to do. He retired on one he knew to be unassailable. "Whether He be a sinner or no I know not." He declined to commit himself; but, said he, "*One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.*" Such a fact was incontrovertible. There he stood as witness. They were silenced. What a moral triumph, won by the statement of a simple fact, stated in a firm but simple way! He said, "*I know.*" Observe, first, it is not "*I think.*" We must abandon the reign of *thought* in these matters, otherwise we are sure to err. Thus Naaman *thought* that the prophet would bid him do some great thing; thus Paul "*thought* with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus." Thus said the Lord, "The time cometh when whosoever killeth you will *think* that he doeth God service;" and therefore says God, in Psalm cxix., "I hate *thoughts.*" When by grace a soul has come to Christ, it *knows* that it is

saved. The weary thinking is over, the conscious enjoyment has begun.

Nor, secondly, is it "*I feel.*" Feelings are but the evidence of my senses, and these are as changeable as the sand of the desert or the waves of the sea. You cannot build on either. It would be a poor thing indeed if the word of God depended for its truthfulness on my feelings about it. A man suffering from fever and ague will shiver on Midsummer-day; or a blind person may declare the sun is not shining. They go by their feelings. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." You believe the report, and the result is salvation.

Far less, thirdly, is it, "*I doubt.*" Doubts may characterize the sceptic or infidel, but not him who has proved the truth of God's word. That word, when received by faith, banishes every fear. It places the sinner on the ground of being utterly lost; it reveals to him a Saviour once dead, now glorified, whose blood cleanses from all sin, and whose work on the cross makes full atonement; it assures him of salvation at the moment of belief. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Hence "*we know.*" Doubt is gone: we rest in the calm and quiet assurance of salvation. We may know little beside. We may be ignorant and unlearned; but happy the soul that can truthfully say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

There is no sermon so powerful as that which is drawn from experience. "One fact is worth a bushel of theories." If I speak what my soul knows and not that which I have merely heard from others, I speak in power. If we use the truth we have, more will be

given; but, for an effective testimony, I should speak what I *know*. Hence, if you know but the forgiveness of sins, bear witness to that; if justification, or sonship, or whatever truth you have made your own, tell it out faithfully, distinctly, by lip and life, so that the blessed Saviour may obtain praise for the salvation He has given. J. W. S.

CHRIST IN THE MIDST OF THE CHURCH.

He calls them His brethren, and sings in the midst of the Church. Think what it is!—not, You may sing now, for I have accomplished redemption, though this is true; but I will sing! Christ leads our praises; He has associated us with Himself now that He takes up all our thoughts and feelings. It is praise for redemption, but it is every thought and feeling I can express to God. For He is a man; He knows what it is, as none of us ever will know, to bear God's wrath. It is over; it is gone for Him on the cross; and it is gone for us by His having taken it. When risen, He declares the Father's name to His brethren, and leads their praises. It is from below the praises go up, founded on redemption and atonement; but the expression of every thought and feeling that can be in my heart, as an exercised man down here, goes up in praise. Christ has gone through all this, enters into it all, and sings in the midst of the Church—a figurative expression, but true. That is, He is the person who leads every feeling and thought of exercised persons, because He has gone through it all. J. N. D.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

BELOVED BROTHER,—I desire to offer a few remarks with reference to "the forgiveness of sins by the Church," on which an article appeared in the May number of the *Christian Friend*. It appears to me that Scripture regards the assembly as administering forgiveness in this world towards those that are without, and that this forgiveness was administered on the reception of persons into the professing Church. This character of forgiveness was connected with baptism. Paul was told to arise and be baptized, and wash away his sins. Peter, to whom the keys of the kingdom of heaven were entrusted, and the authority of binding and loosing on earth was given, admitted Jews (outside) to the kingdom, in Acts ii., and Gentiles (outside), in Acts x. The authority given to the disciples in John xx. 23, appears likewise to be connected with their mission and ministry in the world. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." (See *v.* 21.)

The binding and loosing in Matt. xviii. 18, stands more in connection with Church discipline, but a distinction clearly must be made between the assembly or the disciples administering forgiveness towards those without, on their reception into the house, and the discipline of the house of God, under the authority of Christ, for the maintenance of holiness amongst those that are within.

Christians in the house have received administrative forgiveness, and stand in a place of responsibility,

where all the privileges of the dispensation are to be found and enjoyed. Now what do we learn from the epistles to the Corinthians as to discipline, or the responsibility of the assembly in relation to sins committed by those within? In 1 Cor. v. the apostle states, "Do not ye *judge* them that are within, but them that are without God judgeth." Unjudged evil in the assembly constituted the leaven with which the Corinthians were keeping the feast, and the course of the assembly in relation to the leaven and the evil-doer is clearly laid down: "Purge out the old leaven;" "put away from among yourselves that wicked person." As to the saints, they were identified with the sin, and should have mourned and humbled themselves about it, which they did subsequently. (See 2 Cor. vii. 7–11.) But God's house was no place for fornicators, idolaters, railers, drunkards, extortioners, covetous persons, and such like; and if any man "called a brother" so acted as to deserve such a character, the company of the saints was no place for him. "With such an one no not to eat," marks the social separation, as putting out from amongst those "within" marks the ecclesiastical separation to be made between the saints and the evil-doer. Now it is perfectly clear that if the assembly had bound sin, or put away and judged an evil-doer, on his repentance the assembly should have rejoiced to restore, to comfort, and to forgive.* Hence in 2 Cor. ii. the apostle instructs the Corinthians to act in grace, to comfort and forgive, on the ground of the sufficiency of the punishment which had been inflicted, and lest

* The word used for forgive in 2 Cor. ii. is that used in Luke vii. 42, He "frankly forgave" them both; not that used in *v.* 48, "Thy sins are 'forgiven,'" or for remission in John xx. 23.

the person should be swallowed up with over much sorrow. But we must not forget that the saints *had* previously identified themselves with the sin committed, and made it their own; had felt it as their shame and sorrow; had cleansed God's house, had purged out leaven; had vindicated the Lord's name, and approved themselves clear in the matter. (See 2 Cor. vii. 11.) All these exercises of soul had been gone through and were over in relation to the sin which had brought leaven into the assembly and dishonoured the Lord, before grace and forgiveness were shown and the public restoration of the offender took place; so that it would be a serious thing to build on 2 Cor. ii., severed from 1 Cor. v., a doctrine that the assembly has merely to administer forgiveness, on repentance, in cases in which leaven has been brought into the assembly, or to allege that there is any warrant in 2 Cor. ii. for the assertion as to a saint inside, that "if my sin has been open wickedness, and has brought leaven into the assembly, I must get the forgiveness of the assembly as well as God's forgiveness." A person put out must clearly be restored or forgiven by the assembly; but when an obligation is laid upon saints in the house of God, I think scripture should be given which clearly proves the obligation. Doubtless when a saint has fallen, one mark of true restoration would be confession to another; but to bring the assembly into the case, or to oblige confession to the assembly, appears to me to put the assembly out of its place, and to be contrary to Scripture. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed," is evidently private, and not administrative forgiveness by the assembly.

The case supposed, of a saint having sinned and re-

pented, and administrative forgiveness on the part of the assembly being necessary because leaven has been brought in, is a difficulty in itself; for how can there be leaven without unjudged evil? and if in the past there was unjudged evil unknown to the assembly, it did not touch nor defile the conscience of the assembly. The saints can only act on what is known, however humbled they may be that evil has been allowed to go on undiscovered in their midst. If, on the other hand, the discovery is made through the repentance and confession of the individual, it would surely be a case for private restoration; and why proclaim past evil, which God has covered, when the assembly takes up, in humiliation, only present evil which it is forced to judge to cleanse God's house and clear itself? The sin committed is not the point in 2 Cor. ii., but the public restoration of a person whose sin had been publicly dealt with and cleared already from the consciences of the saints. Again, if a Christian be overtaken in a fault, the spiritual are to restore such a one. If the behaviour of a Christian is of such a character as to necessitate notice for the sake of others, there is nothing about the assembly administering forgiveness; but Timothy is instructed to rebuke them that sin before all, that others also may fear. In Matt. xvi., in the case of trespass referred to, the matter is to be told to the assembly after other efforts in private have failed; but to bring a saint or sin before the assembly is invariably the last resource, as to a final court of appeal where all the authority of Christ is vested on the earth.

It is easy to understand when leaven is not working, and a case does not come under 1 Cor. v. 11, 13, that a

Christian might be severely rebuked before all with the fellowship of the assembly, as a warning to others; but the whole force of the warning would surely be destroyed by the substitution of mere forgiveness for rebuke, besides the objection to the saints being put in an elevated instead of a low place, in reference to sins dishonouring to Christ's name committed in their midst.

I need hardly add that Scripture abounds with exhortations to saints as such to deal with each other in faithfulness and love. We are to wash one another's feet; to love one another with a pure heart fervently; to be kindly affectioned one to another in brotherly love, in honour preferring one another; to exhort one another daily; to comfort one another; to be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another; to warn the unruly, to comfort the feeble-minded, to support the weak, and to be patient toward all; to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ; to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves; to avoid those that cause divisions, to have no company with one who walks disorderly; yet to count him not as an enemy, but to admonish him as a brother. But all this comes under the head of individual activity in the power of the grace of Christ; and if there were only an increase of these holy and healthy activities of love in private life, there would be far less public sorrow, or need for bringing cases before the twos and threes who occupy divine ground, and are seeking to maintain, in feebleness and lowliness, the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.

Your affectionate brother,

J. S. O.

HAS CHRIST DESTROYED THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL?

"CAN it be positively asserted that the Lord Jesus Christ *has* destroyed the works of the devil?"

Not according to the scripture which states, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy (or loose) the works of the devil." (1 John iii. 8.)

The word here rendered from the Greek into English, "destroy," occurs forty-two times in the New Testament, and is commonly and correctly rendered "loose" in most places, as in Matthew xxi. 2, "Loose" the ass tied; John xi. 44, "Loose" Lazarus from his grave-clothes; Luke xiii. 16, "Ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound eighteen years, to be 'loosed'?" To "loose" a shoe string; "loose" the seven seals; "loose" the four angels, &c. &c.

The One that wrote this was God the Holy Spirit; and, naturally enough, as God, the range of His view was God's glory. Men that have got away from God until God lays hold of them measure everything by its bearing upon man down here. If, however, individually God meets them, that stops, and the thought that supplants it is certainly, I am ruined, lost, and undone; what can I do to be saved? The hard, careless souls go on, arguing against the word of God as unintelligible, untrue, very difficult; but they seek not to receive from God the explanation of what is difficult.

To me the meaning of the passage is very simple. Satan's works in the garden of Eden (and the same has been true ever since) have been to make God appear to

man as niggardly—refusing to man, and, as a tyrant, seeking to reap where He had not sowed, and to gather where He had not strawed. God had made the world by His Son and for His Son, and Eden with everything in it suited to man's enjoyment was there; given it all freely, all to be his, until he set up in independence of God. (Gen. iii.) Satan begins with the weaker vessel, suggesting that what struck him most in the whole matter was prohibition on God's part. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (*v.* 1.) The woman replies—not carefully, answering according to what God had said to Adam. Satan suggests that God had told a lie. "Ye shall not surely die" (*v.* 4), and then as a reason for it insinuates that God wanted to keep from man the privilege of full intelligence and of being as God, knowing good and evil. (*v.* 6.) Eve, turning to think of herself, falls under his power.

Here was the first work of Satan as to man—presenting God as a God of prohibition, untruthfulness, and jealousy of man, lest he should get what pertained to God alone.

The gift by God of His Son, and that Son going down to death, the death of the cross, that He might break the bands of Satan's forging, and that whosoever might be free to follow Him, and share His throne and home, spoiled the work of Satan. The same thing has gone on over and over again, on Satan's part against God's character, and on man's part to his own deeper ruin; and so the interference of God through Christ and the Spirit have been renewed times out of mind. And is it a hard thing, or contrary to free gift, if God who knows that the blessing of every one depends upon

His maintaining His own glory as the first thing to be thought of, and working thereunto by His Son and Spirit, if He leaves to man to choose whether he will be of the seed of the woman, fight against Satan, and go to the glory in the end, or of the seed of the serpent? From the fall to the final doom of Satan "my Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said the Lord; and truly if Christ had not made you and me willing in the day of His power, we should both have been under Satan and the world, and in ourselves still.

Adam and Eve's stock were sold by them under sin and Satan; and they cannot say, while they talk of innocency, of not being worse than others, of doing God's will, of the value of souls, &c., that they subserve God's glory. But a Saul turned into a Paul, and an active agent in the war between God and Satan is so, and can say so. To measure everything by *man's* advantage is sin. I am sure you will say so. God's honour and character Christ came to vindicate. And men will to go down; He needs, and will have, and loves to draw to Himself for heaven. G. V. W.

MOUNT OLIVET.

The Watchman's Testimony: "The morning cometh."—ISA. xxi.

The Angels' Testimony: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner."—ACTS i.

The Lord's Testimony: "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."—JOHN xiv.

SOON will the morning come,
With beams of bright array;
Soon will be heard the watchman's cry,
"Behold the break of day!

"Awake, the morning's come!
Arise, O sleeper thou!
The Lord Himself from heaven descends,
The King of glory now.

"Behold the opening sky!
He comes, He comes again,
With cloudless morning, bright and fair,
Like shining after rain."

* * * * *

Midst all Thy hallowed scenes
Around mount Olivet
My spirit lingers, Lord, for Thee,
Thy morning smile to get.

For Him alone I gaze,
The Bridegroom from on high,
Descending with archangel's voice
His Bride to glorify.

Soon shall I hear His shout,
The trump of God, the Word;
And in the twinkling of an eye
Ascend to meet my Lord.

* * * * *

O Jesus, come, and bring
Thy saints that sleep in Thee,
To join the living in the air
In rapturous unity!

From mansions long prepared,
Through Salem's deathless love,
Return, return, O Lord, how long!
And take Thy Bride above. C. F. C.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

(*Continued from page 168.*)

HIRD danger arose from a professed but not real ıility, and an assumption of knowledge about that ɔh was hidden from men; viz., the worshipping ɜls, and an intruding into those things which, vainly ed by the mind of his flesh, the man professed to ɜ seen.* This evil arose from not holding the Head, ı which all the body by joints and bands having rishment, ministered and knit together, increaseth ı the increase of God. Impossible then was it to ıtitute anything for real Christian teaching, or to ıide anything to equal that which there is in Christ those who believe on Him. The truth as to His on, of our being in Christ, and of our union with ı as members of His body, refuted the errors and bare the snares to which these Colossian saints ɜ evidently exposed. "In vain the net is spread in sight of any bird." (Prov. i. 17.) "Not after Christ," e body is of Christ," "Not holding the head." These us that nothing elaborated from man's mind, and former revelation from God, can supersede, equal, e a substitute for true Christian teaching. The full h has come out since Christ has appeared, died, ɑ, and is ascended, and has sent the Holy Ghost. ɜ truth which meets man in the depth of his need, ts it to the full, and more than meets it, teaching

Or as some read "which he has not seen." Omitting the nega- the apostle expresses what the person puffed up asserted he had Retaining it, his judgment is recorded that the assertion was ıe.

us of all that conduces to the healthy growth and right increase of the whole body.

Further, any turning to ordinances, with injunctions to which they were familiar, as "Handle not," "Taste not," "Touch not"—all this was really a denial of Christian truth. So the apostle thus reasons: "If they had died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, were they subject to ordinances respecting things which perish in their using? Such may have the appearance of lowliness, but it was asceticism really practised for the satisfaction of the flesh. Now if Christians had died with Christ from all this, they were also risen with Him; hence the things where He sits at the right hand of God they were to seek, minding too things above, not things on earth, because they are dead, and their life hid with Christ in God, and they looking forward to appear with Him in glory. (ii. 20; iii. 4.)

The fulness in Christ having been set forth, and the Christian's true position in relation to Him having been plainly declared, exhortations next follow as to practice in conformity with the truth. The desires of the flesh and of the mind are to be watched against (*vv.* 5–8), and lying one to another is forbidden, Christians having put off the old man with his deeds, and having put on the new, which is renewed into full knowledge after the image of Him that created him, where all distinctions of race, condition, and position disappear, and Christ is everything and in all. Hence as the elect of God, born of God, characteristics of the divine nature and the ways and spirit of Christ are to be displayed in us (*vv.* 12–14), the peace of Christ ruling in our hearts, and the word of Christ dwelling in us richly in all

wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to God, and doing whatsoever we do in word or deed in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him.

After this we have exhortations touching relative duties. (iii. 18, iv. 1.) For though in the new man there are no distinctions, as we have just learnt, yet as men and women upon earth we find ourselves in different relationships of God's appointment. For the fitting behaviour in such God's word here instructs wives and husbands, children and parents, servants and masters, addressing first, as in Ephesians, the subject class in each relationship; for failure in the others must be no excuse for failure on their part. The wives are to be in subjection, as it is fit in the Lord. Children are to be obedient; for that is well pleasing in the Lord.* Servants being among the heathen really slaves, God here especially encourages them, reminding them of an inheritance in the future which they would receive of the Lord, the recompense for following Him whilst they were on earth. They served the Lord Christ. What encouragement for a poor slave if trampled on here, and denied his rights as a man, to know that God looked on him, and thought of him, and would in the day of the glory of Christ give him openly his position and his inheritance, owning him as one of His sons! How it would help him in many a difficulty and trial to remember that in serving his earthly master aright he was serving the Lord Christ.

* According to the generally received readings, in verse 15 it is the peace of *Christ;* in verse 16, we sing to *God;* in verse 22, the slave is to act fearing the *Lord;* in verse 20, the child is to obey, as that is well pleasing *in* the Lord.

Was injustice meted out to him who had no earthl— protector? The apostle reminds him that the wron doer would surely reap the reward of his deeds. Th patience and contentment were inculcated for one who lot might be the hardest man could know; and if tho in subjection are spoken to, the husband, the father, t master, each receive also their appropriate wor Husbands were to love their wives, and not to be bitt against them. Fathers were not to vex their childre lest they should be discouraged. Masters were to remember they had a Master in heaven. In all this the new man was to be displayed—Christ in them.

Then exhorting them about perseverance in prayer, and the watching to it with thanksgiving, and desiring their prayers for himself in connection with the advancement of God's work, a door of the word to be opened for him to speak the mystery of Christ, for which he was in bonds, he goes on to exhort them as to their behaviour towards those without. Let them walk in wisdom toward such, making use of their opportunities, and careful that their speech should be always with grace, seasoned with salt, so as to know how to answer everyone. (iv. 2–6.)

Now he closes with salutations from those of the circumcision who had been a comfort to him, and from others who had been Gentiles (10–14); and asking them to salute the brethren in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the assembly in his house) for as yet the Laodicean saints seem to have walked well), and giving a word of exhortation to Archippus, who was at Colosse, Paul appends his own salutation: "Remember my bonds. Grace be with you." That done, the letter was ready for Tychicus to convey it, accompanied by Onesimus. C. E. S.

THE FEAST AND THE SABBATH.

BESIDES what we have already been considering in connection with the consecration of the firstborn, the inspired history of the deliverance of the people of Israel from the land of Egypt furnishes other details as to holiness of position and of walk. We have considered what may be called the *external* side—that is to say, the sanctification of the person, of the whole being—of those who have been delivered by the power of God. We have now brought before us another side of the subject which is of deep importance for the conscience, and we shall see how Scripture presents the state of heart of those who are sanctified, and the manner in which God in His goodness produces this state according to His *own* nature, of which we are made partakers. This is absolutely necessary if there is to be true communion between Him and His redeemed. And this is what God seeks; His word is full of precious revelations connected with it. We might have thought that such communion was impossible between God and His creatures; but in His grace He shows us not only that He will have it so, but also the way in which it is to be realized and maintained. The blessed and wonderful consequence of redemption we shall find to be that God dwells in the midst of His people; that presupposes that sin is taken away righteously, so as to glorify God perfectly. We know that the precious blood of Christ is alone able to do this; but God gave many types of the one perfect sacrifice in the various offerings ordained for His people.

The blood sprinkled on the door-posts of the houses of the Israelites in Egypt must have already spoken to their consciences. It was not to deliver them from their bondage, or from the power of Pharaoh, but it showed them what was necessary to shelter them from God's judgment; for the first great point to be settled was their relationship with Him. He was "come down to deliver them," and before Him and with Him they must stand.

If they entered as they were into judgment, there could be no more hope for them than for the Egyptians, for all were sinners; but God said, "When I see the blood I will pass over you."

The blood was God's provision to shelter them, "making atonement for the soul." It was His ordered way of delivering them from the judgment which fell on the Egyptians. And He would have them feel in the depths of their souls that their deliverance was wholly due to His direct intervention on their behalf.

To maintain in their hearts the constant remembrance of this, God ordained for them a solemn feast, to be kept from year to year, in the first month—the Passover on the fourteenth day—which was followed immediately by the feast of unleavened bread, which lasted for seven days. The meaning of the unleavened bread is given to us in the first epistle to the Corinthians. We will consider it presently. But for the moment let us look at another characteristic of this feast, one of the three special occasions on which all the males in Israel were ordered to appear before God. (Deut. xvi. 16.) It began and closed with a "holy convocation," or assembling of the people, on which days it was ordained that "no manner of work" was to be done. (Exod.

xii. 16; Lev. xxiii. 5–8.) Now the divine thought in this rest comes out more clearly in connection with the Sabbath instituted immediately after (Exod. xvi.), and carries us back to its origin after the work of creation was complete. (Compare Exod. xx. 8–11.)

There must be rest of heart in order that communion may exist. This is even true in earthly circumstances and relationships. How much more, when it is a question of having to do with a righteous and holy God, and of drawing near to Him! The Lord said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*." (Matt. xi. 28.) Let us then consider the place that "rest" was to have in the ordinances established of God for His redeemed people, and gather up the instruction contained in these days of "holy convocation," when all the people were to present themselves before God, and when every work of service was absolutely forbidden.

Complete rest characterized these days. Its moral importance is shown, as we have said, even more remarkably, shortly after the children of Israel left the land of Egypt. The provisions they had brought with them were then exhausted; and in the terrible desert of Sin, into which they had come, there was not the smallest resource for man; the flocks alone could find food there.

The people murmured against Moses, complaining that he had brought them into the wilderness to kill all the assembly with hunger. "Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which

they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily." And they did so. On the sixth day the Lord explained to them this double provision, saying, "To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord; bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you, to be kept until the morning. . . . . Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. . . . . So the people rested on the seventh day." (Exod. xvi. 4–30.) We find then that the "manna," the heavenly food with which God supplied His people to meet their daily need, was made subordinate to the "rest" which He ordained for them, and which surpassed every other consideration. The Lord says, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath." (Mark ii. 27.)

God, who was taking Israel for His peculiar people, was bringing them into relationship with Himself, according to the principles which He had established from the beginning. It is true indeed that the sabbath of rest thus instituted for man was without fruit for him; for sin, into which he had fallen, prevented his enjoyment of it. And unless God intervened in sovereign goodness, communion with Him had become an impossibility for man from that time forward; for communion is evidently based upon holiness; and so we read, "God blessed the seventh day, and *sanctified* it." (Gen. ii. 3; Exodus xx. 11.) In order therefore to give His people the enjoyment of the forfeited sabbath, God must charge Himself with their sanctification. This is indeed just what we find (see Exodus xxxi. 13): "Speak thou also unto the children of

Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; *that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.*" And this reminds us of what the prophet says to whom the word of the Lord came: "Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, *that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.*" (Ezek. xx. 12.)

This shows us why the sabbath held such a prominent place in the institutions of the children of Israel, and why one of the ten commandments is specially devoted to the observance of this day. After the three first, which forbid the having or making any God but the Lord, or the taking of His name in vain, we come to the fourth, which runs thus: "Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of Jehovah thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it." And elsewhere it is added: "Whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath-day, he shall surely be put to death." (Exodus xx. 8–11; xxxi. 12–17.) The sabbath was a perpetual sign between God and the children of Israel, and the rest was to be inviolable.

This rest was not a matter of choice, nor was it in any way dependant on human will. It was to be perfect, and the God of grace, who had prepared it for man, took upon himself to work out the sanctification, without which it would have been of no avail for sinful man. The sabbath was the continual remembrance of the accomplished work of the Creator, and in this fact we get the explanation of its moral character, as well as of its perfection. God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. He had ended His work, and He rested on the seventh day. God's sabbath is thus the expression of His complete satisfaction with a perfect scene, where nothing is lacking that could add to the happiness of those creatures to whom He grants the enjoyment of it all in communion with Himself.

Sin, however, in entering into the world, ruined everything, and prevented man's enjoying creation rest. But the rest in God's thought and purpose remains notwithstanding; for God has established it, and the day will come when man too will enjoy it with Him. God has shown us in the meanwhile, by His ways with the children of Israel, that the only possible ground on which man could enter into His rest in righteousness and holiness is that of accomplished redemption; and faith lays hold of this truth, and enjoys beforehand what will be realized in glory. Redemption and its consequences, according to God's purposes, have then to be maintained steadily before the soul, and this God did for Israel; first in connection with the passover, and then in a more direct way by the institution of the sabbath.*

* Observe too that the Psalms xciii–ci., which treat of the millennial reign of Christ, are introduced by the xcii., of which the title is, "A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath-day."

Now all that happened to the Israelites was written for our instruction; their history abounds with figures of what ultimately concerns us. God would teach us the moral order of His ways, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. (Rom. xv. 4; 1 Cor. x. 6.) It is our duty to search the Scriptures, by the direction and light of the Holy Spirit, that we may lay hold of the thoughts of God in the things He has revealed. It is this moral sequence in truth that we need to lay hold of.

But we must not forget the "unleavened bread." 1 Cor. 5 gives us the full explanation of it. It is written: "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

The "unleavened bread" is then, first of all, an expression of what believers are before God by virtue of the work of Christ, the true paschal "Lamb," whose blood purifies from all sin. (John i. 29; 1 John i. 7.) It is said, "Ye *are* unleavened." That is the divine standing of the believer, the result of Christ's death; but then the conduct is to correspond in every particular with this perfect position in which God has placed us by means of redemption. "Let us keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth;" that is to say, let us walk before God in holiness—in a manner worthy of Him who has called us to His kingdom and glory. (1 Thess. ii. 12.) Therefore everything that is not in accordance with the *truth* of God must be "put away," as the Israelites, on pain of death, were to

put away all leaven from their houses. God requires a perfectly holy walk.

This truth is clearly set forth in the history of the Israelites, "who were sanctified" to hear the law of God, the ten commandments, proclaimed on the top of mount Sinai; even the mountain was sanctified. (Exod. xix. 10, 14, 22, 23.) The priests who approached God were sanctified in an especial manner; for God said, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me." (Exod. xxix.; Lev. viii. x. 3.) And the law was summed up thus: "Ye shall be holy; for I, the Lord your God, am holy." (Exod. xxii. 31; Lev. xix. 2, &c.) This passage is quoted and applied to Christians. (1 Peter i. 16.)

Now faith accepts this established relation with God, as we see in the song of the Israelites after their deliverance from Egypt, on the other side of the Red Sea. They say, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord? . . . who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? . . . Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength *unto thy holy habitation.*" (Exod. xv. 11, 13.)

Salvation is only of God. He leads us by the work of Christ into close relationship with Himself, giving us free access into His very presence by the blood of Christ. By His love He removes every fear, that love being made known on the ground of righteousness; and He gives us a good conscience by the assurance that all our sins are forgiven on account of the sacrifice which Christ has offered. (Heb. x. 2, 19, 22; ix. 26.) Christ has entered into heaven itself, having obtained "eternal redemption" for us; and there it is that the

believer will enjoy fully and for ever that sabbath rest* which remains for the people of God. (Heb. ix. 12, iv. 9.) It will be a scene of absolute perfection and perfect happiness, where God Himself will be satisfied in every way, and will lead His people into participation with His own joy in communion with Himself. One of the operations of the Holy Spirit is to cause us to enter by faith even now into the enjoyment of these things, that our hearts may overflow with joy, and that we may have strength and courage for walking in holiness with God.

We have other things to examine in the types as to the conditions upon which communion can exist when God begins to dwell amongst men. We reserve them for another article, in which we shall consider the tabernacle and the altar. W. J. L.

EXPOSITORY JOTTINGS.

I. KEEPING THE WORD OF CHRIST.

In John xiv. 23 the Lord gives this as an evidence of love to Himself: "If a man love me, he will keep my word" (not words). In Rev. iii. keeping His word is given as one of the characteristics of Philadelphia. It is clear therefore that too much importance cannot be attached to it. What then is keeping the word of Christ? It is more than obedience; it is rather that from which obedience flows. It is so prizing a word that it is treasured up in the heart, where it becomes formative, through the power of the Holy Spirit, pro-

* See iv. 9, where "rest" is given in the margin as "keeping of a sabbath," which is the true force of the word.

ducing divine thoughts and affections, sanctifying through the truth—separating from evil, and purifying even as Christ is pure. Thus kept within the heart it becomes the light of the daily path, governing the whole life of the believer. Then it should be remembered that the word of Christ—*i.e.* the sum of His communications to His people—is, in fact, the revelation of Himself. Thus every precept given to us through the Scriptures is some trait of His own life. For example if we are told to "put on bowels of mercies, kindness humbleness of mind," &c. (Col. iii. 12), it is because He exhibited all these things in perfection in His pathway through this world, yea, indeed, because He *is* all these things; for these graces are but the rays of the glory that now shine from His unveiled face at the right hand of God. Christ Himself therefore, as revealed in His word, is our only standard—our standard for walk, and our standard for holiness; and hence keeping His word, only that which is pleasing and suitable to Him will be accepted; all else will be refused.

If this be true, keeping the word of Christ cannot be an ecclesiastical term; nay, it covers of necessity the whole ground on which the believer stands—his life and walk as an individual saint; his relationship to the saints and to Christ, as being with them, a member of His body, and all his and their activities in worship and service. It is possible then to be keeping the word of Christ ecclesiastically, and to be at the same time refusing it in walk and conversation. Nothing can be more dangerous than to *assume* that we are keeping the word of Christ. If we do this, so beguiling are the artifices of Satan, it is the sure proof that we are the victims of self-deception, and that we are really

cherishing a Laodicean spirit. If we only *desire* to keep His word, we shall constantly use it to test all our ways, all our methods in the Church, and all our associations; and we should instantly reject every suggestion not sanctioned by it, or which presented a temptation to departure from it.

It need scarcely be added that it is the pathway of all blessing. It is the one lesson of the book of Deuteronomy, and indeed of every book of Scripture. Thus whenever God's people of any age or dispensation have been found delighting in His word, they have invariably dwelt happy and secure, proving day by day more and more His goodness, grace, and love; and whenever they have neglected, forsaken, or rejected it, their constant experience has been one of sorrow and misery. This teaches unmistakeably that, whatever our trials or difficulties, the means of restoration lie in a return to the word of Christ. We should begin by self-judgment—judging ourselves and our ways by its help; "for the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." (Heb. iv. 12, 13.) We should resolutely search out our first departure from it, test every existing thing with which we are connected by it, and unflinchingly refuse whatever does not answer to it, however sacred it may be in our eyes from reverence or affection. Then humbling ourselves before God with confession and true brokenness of spirit, and seeking grace from Him to enable us to enshrine the

word of Christ in our hearts, to have it dwelling richly in us (Col. iii.), we should soon rejoice in renewed unity and blessing. The Lord Jesus Christ must have the pre-eminence, and practically we give Him this place when our hearts are in subjection to His word.

We do not forget our feeble condition, or the fact that the perilous times have come upon us; but while bearing this in mind, it is not too much to say that if any company of Christians were, by the grace of God, and in the power of His Spirit, led with true purpose of heart to seek, as their one object, to keep the word of Christ, they would find that there was no limit to their blessing; they would prove the presence of the Lord in their midst, when gathered together to His name, in a manner rarely experienced; they would be permitted to see, as they had seldom done before, the testimony of His word accompanied with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power, and individually they would enter upon the enjoyment of the richest of all blessings—the manifestation of Christ to their souls. (John xiv. 21–23.) May the Lord work in many hearts to produce an unquenchable desire to be found keeping His word for His name's sake.

II. SUBSTITUTES IN SERVICE.

Almost all accept the principle of individuality in service, and consequently of direct responsibility to the Lord, and to Him alone. There is nothing indeed more distinctly taught in the word of God. As in the case of Bezaleel and Aholiab (Exodus xxxi.), the Lord designates and qualifies for the service, and directs in its performance. A condition, therefore, of all true service is, that it be received immediately from the Lord.

Thus Isaiah, when he "heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" replied, "Here am I, send me." (Isa. vi. 8.) Saul likewise, when subdued at the feet of the risen and glorified Christ, said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" There is only one example, as far as we can discover, of anything like substituting one person for another in the Lord's work. When Elijah fled from fear of Jezebel, and, in utter weariness and despondency of soul at the failure of everything round about him, desired only to die, he was comforted by angelic ministrations, and finally found himself at Horeb, the mount of God. There the Lord, in His grace and tenderness, dealt with and corrected his servant, and commissioned him anew; and one of His instructions was, "Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet *in thy room*." (1 Kings xix. 16.) It must be borne in mind, however, first, that this was a divine substitution (if it were exactly that) of one for another; secondly, that it was by no means sending Elisha to do the work of Elijah; and lastly, that it is the continuation of Elijah's ministry, in this special way, which makes it so remarkably a type of the ministry of Christ in its twofold character; viz., while on earth and in resurrection. Elisha was, therefore, a prophet in the room of Elijah only in the sense of continuing his service, though in a new character, with a view to its typical significance. There is nothing whatever in the case to militate against the principle affirmed of the individuality of service and individual responsibility.

If this be so, do not many of the methods and practices of this day require examination and revision? For example, if a servant of the Lord is led to under-

take any special service, and is hindered in any way, either by unexpected circumstances or by sickness, can it be incumbent on him to find a substitute? It is an easy way out of the difficulty; but is it not possible that in accepting this solution he frustrates the Lord's object in raising up the hindrance, and also prevents that exercise of soul which the Lord would produce? For surely, if I had thought the Lord was sending me on a distinct mission, and I am not permitted to go, it should raise many a question in my soul as to how it was that I had mistaken the Lord's mind. If indeed the principle laid down be scriptural, responsibility in service cannot be transferred. Could Isaiah, for example, after offering himself for the Lord's work, have requested Micah, who was also a prophet at the same period, to fill his place? Could Paul have asked Peter to undertake his mission for him? or could Timothy have changed places and service with Titus?

Again, if the Lord specially uses one of His servants in some distinct branch of service, and He Himself terminate the labours of His servant by taking him to be with Himself, are we in the current of His mind when we seek to provide a successor? It would be indeed a most blessed occupation to be found waiting on Him with regard to it, looking to Him to raise up and send another of His servants, if it should be His will. But together with this, it should be also remembered that each servant, as we have seen, must receive his own mission from the Lord, and that it is not the Lord's way, therefore, to send a servant to carry on another's work, even though he labour in the same field. No, the Lord is sovereign; and He says to one, Do this; and to another, Go here, or, Go there; and the

ervice is blessed in its performance just in proportion s it is directly received from Him, and done with a ingle eye to His glory in obedience to His will.

One other question is suggested by the foregoing con-iderations. It is, Whether this divine principle of re-ponsibility admits of the undertaking to provide for ny branch of service? For example, have we in the criptures anything like the practice, which has grown p in modern days, of one servant engaging to find :her servants to carry on the Lord's work in preaching ıe gospel in a particular place? It is fully and thank-ılly admitted that the Lord may speak to His ırvants, and even give them their work, through one : His people; but that is a very different thing from ppointing a brother for the purpose, or allowing him to ccupy the position, of arranging for the ministry of the ord of God.

In offering these observations the difficulties of ırvice are not forgotten. These will increase with the ıcreasing confusion, and with the fuller development f the characteristics of the perilous times. The time as already, as in fact it has always been, come when ll true service must be conflict—conflict with the ad-ersary, and conflict even with many believers, for the ıaintenance of the truth. And just because of this, it s more than ever necessary to test all our ways by the vritten Word, to return in all things to divine prin-iples. No amount of weakness or confusion justifies he adoption of unscriptural methods. Nothing is ex-pedient that is not according to the word of God; and t is only when we are in subjection to it that we can ssuredly count upon the Lord's presence and the Lord's blessing. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

E. D.

A READING.

EPHESIANS i.

YOU get that word "faithful" added in the first verse of Ephesians and Colossians. "Saints" means that God has sanctified them; but "faithful," that is what they were; they were in the exercise of faith towards God and our Lord Jesus Christ. It *is* having faith, but at the same time it practically comes to being faithful to the position we are in. Faithful is that they have the faith. It is a great principle, not merely here that they were consistent in everything, but that they were characterized by walking in the faith. "The life which I live in the flesh I live by the *faith* of the Son of God." You will find that that is a principle of conduct all through ordinary life. "I live *by* the faith," because it gives a different spring and character to the whole life. "We walk *by faith*, not by sight." It is not that each person is exactly consistent in everything, but their life was a life of faith, an object before them which governed their lives. It is an object outside the heart and outside the world, and therefore it carries the heart through the world independent of it.

Then we get Christ presented distinctly in a double character—as Son of the Father and as Man—and that lies at the root of our whole condition too. He is the *God* of our Lord Jesus Christ as *Man*, and the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ as *Son*. That runs all through. "My Father and your Father." During His *life* He always said Father, because He was a Son. On the cross, when He was dying, drinking the cup, He said, "My

God;" but in Gethsemane He said "Father;" and at the end He says, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." But after He is risen (John xx.) He uses both together—"My Father . . . my God"—as if He would say, "I have brought you in righteousness to God, and into the place of sons with the Father." And it is the first time He calls them "brethren." When the disciples found He was risen they were not gathered at all; it was Mary's message that practically brought that out. They were then gathered, and Christ with them.

You get here "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and then the apostle goes on to unfold Christ. In Heb. i. 8 you find Him first addressed as God—"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;" and then, when He is looked at as Man in the next verse, it is, "God, even *thy* God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows," and then what makes it wonderful is that He brings in others as His companions—"fellows:" addresses Him as God in one verse, and calls us His companions at the end. You get Christ in these two characters, as Man and as Son. Being a Son, it is of great moment to us that He is a Man; He did not take up angels, but the seed of Abraham. In Eph. i. these two names are brought out, verse 4 the name of God, and verse 5 the name of Father. God has "chosen us in Him . . . that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Christ was holy, blameless in His ways, and He is love—just what we are before God. Then in verse 5 it is as Father; both names used for the character in which we are before God. But we must not pass over verse 3. There we find the best kind of blessings, in the best place; they

are in Christ, and they are *all* there. We have temporal mercies assuredly, but that is just a kind of passing thing, and not our *portion*. Here it is all that we shall be in heaven. The Holy Ghost being here, we get them all in spirit *now*, everything. Verse 3 is true now in measure according as we know the power of the Spirit, though of course we have to wait for our bodies; but what is moral is real to us now.

In Ephesians we get it all as it is in the mind of God. In Romans it is just the opposite; it begins with man's responsibility. The only *fact* you get at all in the Ephesians is, that Christ was raised up to the right hand of the Father, at the end of chap. i. (you get the blessings of course); chap. iii. is special, because it gives Paul's administration. By giving the truth to us as it is in the mind of God, we get it in its absolute perfectness.

Verse 4 is *God's* nature, and I see that the thought of God is to have me answering to His nature and in His presence. We are to be before Him according to His own nature, and we are in His presence. We have a nature capable of enjoying this, and are in the presence of an object that is ever to be enjoyed—God in fact. It is just what Christ was; He was "holy, and without blame," and always before God. We shall have it perfectly when we are before God, but it is our place now by the Spirit. Then in the next verse you get the *Father*, and to give it its full character He says "*to Himself;*" and there is another thing very beautiful in this verse: it is "according to the good pleasure of His will." He did not say that in the previous verse, because it is *not* His will to have an unholy being before Him (there *are* lots of unholy beings before Him

of course); and that therefore hangs on the nature of *God*, and so He does not say, "According to the good pleasure of His will." But in verse 5 it is this special kind of love that makes us "children." Always in Scripture we find we are predestinated *to* something; it is some plan God has to bring us into blessing. We have it here twice (*vv.* 5 and 11). This is a wonderful passage, because we get Christ before God, holy and without blame, and we get Him as Son; and He takes us into both these places. And that is what He calls "the *glory* of His grace" (*v.* 6), to bring us into His presence *in* Christ, according to what Christ is. You get more in the English word "adoption," for it is putting us into the place of sons; but the way we get into the place of sons is by being born of God. Generally John speaks of being children. The nature is *children*, but when you get *sons* in the general it is used for grown-up children. Children is a tenderer word. In this passage we have nothing to do with children as distinct from sons. It is having a part with Christ that *makes* us sons, and the Holy Ghost gives us the consciousness by which we cry "Abba, Father."

The difference between counsel and purpose is, that purpose is more the intention of the will, and counsel the wisdom of the mind. All these thoughts and purposes are "the glory of His grace," and then He says, "Wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." He does not say "in *Christ*," but "in the *Beloved*;" for we are loved as Christ is loved. And only in verse 7 does He come to what met our responsibility and ruin. After he has put us completely in the place as it is in God's mind, *then* he says, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the for-

giveness of sins." It does not say "the glory of His grace" here, but "according to the *riches* of His grace;" it is given to us according to the wealth of God. When we come for this redemption we must come according to our wants; but our wants are not the measure of what we have got in the cross. There we have God spending His own Son for us according to the *riches* of His grace. When I do come to Him, I find I have forgiveness according to what *God* is, and not merely according to what *I* wanted. He meets our poverty, but He meets it according to His own riches. It is striking how every word has its weight in this passage. I am "accepted in the Beloved," not merely that the sins are blotted out.

That closes the position, and then he comes to the dispensation; and he refers to that at the end of the chapter. "The hope of His calling" (*v.* 18) is what we have been upon now. Then you get that this grace is not merely redemption, and forgiveness, and so on, but that, having put us into this place of perfect blessing, He unfolds all His intentions as to Christ Himself. He has caused this grace to abound (*v.* 8), not merely in redeeming us, and now He says, "You will be able to comprehend my plans about Christ." (*vv.* 9, 10.) Then he tells us we are joint-heirs with Him. The "hope of His calling" is the first part of the chapter, and then, after He has stated what His plans are with regard to Christ, we get the second thing—the inheritance. His plan in Christ is to collect *everything* (not merely people) under Him who is the Head of it, and in *this* we are joint-heirs with Christ. It is *God's* inheritance. (*v.* 18.) If you think of Israel, you will understand it; for God would not allow the land to be

sold for more than fifty years, "for it is mine," He says. Israel was God's land, and yet He inherited it in Israel; and so He inherits all things in the saints. Jacob was His inheritance, because it was an earthly thing down here. He always takes an individual position. (*v.* 18.) He does not say the *Church* is heir. The "mystery" involves for us the Church; but "the mystery of His will" involves the gathering together of everything under Christ, the Church being His body *when* that takes place. In Colossians you get the reason. There are three reasons why Christ takes everything in Scripture. First, because He created everything (Col. i. 16), and then (*v.* 18), "He is the Head of the body, the Church." He is Head *over* the things, but He is Head *to* the Church; and that word "filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 23) is not simply as God, but "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things." He fills all things in the power of redemption. That is the first ground of his possessing the things, because He created them all. But in Heb. i. you get another title (*v.* 2), "Appointed *heir* of all things," and then the third title is in Heb. ii. 6, 7. He possesses them as *man*. Those three titles come in as creating everything, as being Son He is heir, and being man He is the object of God's purpose, because He has set *man* over them. And another thing comes in because it is in redemption. Till you get Christ glorified on high you do not get the Head, and so you cannot get the Body.

"Who pre-trusted in Christ." (*v.* 12.) The Jews when they see Him will only get the earthly blessing, but those who pre-trusted will get the heavenly thing. Those who trust before they see Him get the blessing.

Verse 13 refers to the Gentiles being sealed, as a sign that they were brought into the same blessing. Verse 14 brings in His *glory;* they have got *into* it all. "The gospel of your salvation (*v.* 13); that is, that the sovereign mercy which visited the Gentiles had given them salvation. I do not believe people get sealed who only believe in Christ's *Person.* Salvation applies to the two things: "Ready to be revealed in the last time," and then, besides that, the work by which we are already saved. The Spirit (*v.* 14) is the earnest of our inheritance which we have not got yet, "*until* the redemption of the purchased possession;" that is, "to the praise of His glory."

It is a great thing to see it is "the gospel of our *salvation;*" for it is a big word. J. N. D.

THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON.

THE epistle to Philemon is the shortest of all the canonical letters of Paul. Conjoining Timothy with him in the salutation, as he had done to that addressed to all the Colossian saints, he here addresses, in company with Philemon and Apphia his wife, Archippus, a labourer in the Word, and the Church in Philemon's house, sending the letter, not by Tychicus, but most likely by the one who was most deeply and personally interested in its contents.

Onesimus, who was Philemon's fugitive slave, had been brought in the providence of God across the path of the apostle of the Gentiles during the latter's imprisonment at Rome. (*v.* 10.) Converted through his instrumentality he would learn that his earthly master

at Colosse was known to Paul, and owed his salvation under God to the same gospel, and to the same human agency. Paul was the father in the faith of both Philemon and Onesimus (*v* 19), though how and when the apostle had met with Philemon we know not; for Colosse, in which the latter lived, was a town in which the former had never worked.

Onesimus, once a child of wrath, and walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, was such no longer. He was a child of God, set free from the slavery of sin and the devil, enjoying redemption by blood; but he was Philemon's slave still. Conversion does not necessarily change the social condition. Of this fact some at Colosse must have been continually, and perhaps painfully, reminded. (Col. iii. 22–25.) Manumission because of his conversion no slave could demand, even of a Christian master. On this point the apostle is most clear, both in writing to Timothy and in this short letter to Philemon.

To the former he writes, "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and the doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort." (1 Tim. vi. 1, 2.) Addressing the latter, he says, "Whom I have sent again to thee. But do thou *receive* him, that is, mine own bowels: whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered unto me in the bonds of the gospel: but without thy mind would I do nothing;

that thy benefit [or good] should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly. For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou mightest receive him for ever; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, especially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?" (*vv.* 12–16.)

Thus the rights of the master to the service of his slave are most carefully preserved. Righteousness is a distinctive feature of Christianity as well as grace; and on the question of slavery it was only by the strict maintenance of the rights of the master that the opportunity could be given for the display on his part of grace in giving freedom to his slave.

Onesimus, when converted, awoke to the comprehension of this. Set free by grace from all fear of divine judgment, conscious of forgiveness of sins, both plenary and administrative, so that none committed before his conversion could be brought up against him for judgment before God, or before the assembly, he was made to own by returning to Philemon that his status as a slave had not been changed, because a birth-tie, and the consequent link of Christian brotherhood, now existed between his master and himself. So the one who had run away, and perhaps had directly defrauded Philemon, had to return, and to submit himself to his pleasure.

Slavery formed no part of man's social organisation at the beginning, though in early times after the flood it evidently had taken deep root among men on earth. The Israelites could by the law possess slaves from the Gentiles, and for such there was no institution of a jubilee that could set them free. Still, though slavery was allowed by God, it was never instituted by Him

any more than polygamy, which was also permitted by the law. Hence when Christianity appeared it was confronted by social institutions which were not originally from God. We may discern, then, the practical value of this epistle, and the wisdom of its finding a place in canonical Scripture; for whilst other parts of the volume tell us of the immense change effected for us by the atoning death of the Lord Jesus, this short letter teaches us that human rights are not abrogated, nor is social status necessarily changed, by the introduction of Christianity, which affords an opportunity for the Christian to act in grace towards one who has injured him. In truth it was never meant to set the world to rights; it is to teach its followers how to walk in a scene which is not ordered in accordance with the mind of God. In harmony with this Onesimus was sent back to Philemon, but with this letter in his hand, at once a commendation from Paul on his behalf to the saints at Colosse, and a communication to ensure him a favourable reception from his master, who may have been injured by him, or irritated against him.

We cannot doubt it obtained the object for which it was written, considering the description it gives of his master, and the appeal made to his heart, both direct and indirect, by the aged apostle. "Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow-labourer, and to our sister Apphia" (for thus we should read), "and to Archippus, our fellow-soldier, and to the Church in thy house, grace unto you, and peace from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." Philemon was a man of means at Colosse, who with his wife Apphia was an heir of the grace of life. He was a worker for the Master as well;

so to Paul and Timothy he was dearly beloved, and a recognised fellow-labourer. In his house a company of the saints met, and by him the bowels of the saints were refreshed. (*v.* 7.) He had received, and he gave. Grace had opened his heart, and he found a circle to which it could go out—the saints of God. (*v.* 5.) A partaker of the divine nature, that nature was active in him, as Paul had heard, so to its dictates the apostle appeals on behalf of Onesimus (*vv.* 8–17) that Philemon's fellowship in the faith should become operative in the acknowledgment of every good thing that is "in us" in Christ Jesus. What justice could not have claimed, that Paul counted on Philemon to manifest, the recognition in Onesimus of the work of grace, which through Paul's instrumentality had been effected.

Of two things it would seem Onesimus was guilty. He had run away from his master, and he had defrauded him likewise. With what delicacy, as it has been observed, does the apostle treat of all this? If he refers to the running away, he calls it departing. (*v.* 15.) Writing of his fraudulent conduct Paul offers to repay what is owing; but not a word does he drop that could minister to any feeling of resentment in the heart of Philemon. At the same time he fully maintains the rights of the master, by which opportunity would be afforded the latter to show the grace that was in his heart. Paul might have been bold in Christ to command what was fitting. He would rather for love's sake take the place of intercession with his child in the faith for another child in the faith, in whom they each must have had a marked interest. Christ's servant Onesimus now was, though still Philemon's slave. On his behalf Paul pleaded, and in such a way that Philemon could not

surely have remained obdurate. It was Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus, who addressed him. Could Philemon have turned a deaf ear to such an appeal? He doubtless did not add to the apostle's sorrows by refusing to receive and forgive the one formerly unprofitable, but now profitable to Paul and to himself. "*Receive* him," writes the apostle, "that is, mine own bowels." "If thou count me a partner, receive him as myself." (*vv.* 12, 17.)

But probably he had defrauded his master. Paul does not overlook this. He does not tell Philemon to make up his mind to the loss, whatever it was. On the contrary, he voluntarily becomes a surety for the payment of it, if it should be demanded. "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth ought, put that to my account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides." Philemon knew well to what the apostle referred, and Paul evidently counted on a full response. "Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in Christ. Having confidence in thy obedience I write unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say." (*vv.* 20, 21.) Paul had said, "Receive him as myself." Then Onesimus, as it were, dropping out of sight, it became a matter between Paul and Philemon. (*vv.* 18–21.) Paul had fully taken on himself to answer for any fraud on the part of Onesimus.

Now, after making one more request, he closes this letter, written probably with his own hand. (*v.* 19.) "But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you." He had included others with Philemon in the salutation at

the beginning, so he counted on the prayers of them all whilst requesting Philemon to find him a lodging. We may well believe that, if he carried out his intention, and paid a visit to Colosse for the first time in his missionary career, he did not meet with a cold reception, nor was his heart grieved by finding Onesimus ill-treated. Philemon, Onesimus, and Paul, with Apphia, would surely have had happy fellowship together under the roof of him in whose house a company of the saints met.

The salutations follow, addressed to Philemon. "Epaphras saluteth thee, my fellow-prisoner in Christ; Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow-labourers." In the letter to the Colossians Aristarchus was his fellow-prisoner. Here it is Epaphras. Did the saints take it in turn to share the apostle's imprisonment? The salutations, we have said, were to Philemon. Paul's closing wish was for the whole company in his house. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." The divine wisdom is manifest in placing this letter among the collection of writings which form the Scriptures of truth. For the doctrines of grace we must turn elsewhere. But certain questions in connection with social life and Christianity here receive their solution. C. E. S.

We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and we shall be in Him when the heavens and earth have passed away. What can touch this eternal union? "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one."

G. V. W.

GOD'S ORDER.

In every relationship or position in which the believer may be set, the secret of happiness lies in the maintenance of the divine order. Whether in the family, the household, or the Church, if there be failure to uphold God's order, or if there be the substitution of that which is of man, for the sake of convenience and expediency, confusion and discord must be the inevitable result. How many striking evidences of this may be gleaned from the Scriptures!

Take first the family. The value God Himself sets upon subjection to His order is seen in that familiar passage in which He commends Abraham, on the ground that "he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment," &c. (Gen. xviii. 19.) In the epistles of Ephesians and Colossians also what care is taken to enjoin on every member of the Christian household the fulfilment of their several relative responsibilities. Children and servants, as well as parents and masters, husbands and wives, are directed as to the duties of their respective positions. On the other hand, what sad examples of parental misrule and of filial disobedience are preserved in the Scriptures for our admonition and warning. The happiness of the families of Eli, Samuel, David, and many others, was wrecked simply because the parents in these cases did not establish and uphold the divine governmental order. And not only was it the case that the happiness of the family was

destroyed, but the sin, whether of parental failure, or of the children's disobedience, brought with it the divine judgment. (Read, for example, 1 Sam. iii. 11–14.)

Wherein lies then the maintenance of God's order in the family? The answer to this question is found in both Ephesians and Colossians. (Eph. v. 22–33, vi. 1–9; Col. iii. 18–25, iv. 1.) The husband is the head, and as such has to act as God's viceregent, to govern not according to his, but according to the divine will. The authority put into his hands is from the Lord, and it is his to wield for Him, and it cannot therefore be delegated to another. The wife is in subjection to her husband, even as the Church is subject to Christ, the husband on his part having to love his wife even as Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. The responsibility of children is to obey their parents in the Lord. Their obedience is to be absolute, qualified only by the condition—in the Lord. Servants have likewise to obey their masters, parents and masters having on their side their respective obligations.

With these instructions before us, it is easy to perceive that if the wife govern instead of the husband, or if the children are permitted to have their own way, to please themselves instead of living in subjection; or if, again, servants are allowed to govern the household, it could not be productive either of blessing, harmony, or happiness. No; the pathway of blessing is the pathway of obedience in the several spheres we are called upon to fill. And when this is acknowledged by the various members of a family, that household becomes a testimony for God in a scene where all have departed from Him—a bright circle of light in the midst of surrounding darkness, and an anticipation of millennial blessing

when the Lord's authority shall be acknowledged throughout the whole world.

It should not be forgotten that a large part of our lives is spent in our homes, and that the household therefore is the chief scene of our testimony. In the incessant questioning as to what is the testimony, it might be well to remember that one part of it should certainly be the expression of Christ in the household—Christ in all the various relationships of the household. "To me to live is Christ." This is the testimony indeed, whether at home, in the Church, or the world.

If now the maintenance of the divine order be of all importance in the family, it certainly is not less so in divine things—in the Church. This is everywhere insisted upon; and there are several departments (so to speak) concerning which special warning or instruction is vouchsafed; viz., worship, teaching, and government. We have more than one remarkable instance of the consequences of the neglect of God's order in worship. After David was established in Jerusalem as king over both Judah and Israel, he desired to "bring again the ark of our God to us: for," said he, "we enquired not at it in the days of Saul." (1 Chron. xiii. 3.) The desire was right, the offspring of true piety, one that proceeded from God Himself. But even the desires that are produced by the Spirit of God in us must be expressed in divine channels, in obedience to the Word. David had not as yet learnt this lesson, and he made his own arrangements for the transport of the ark to mount Zion. A new cart was provided, trusted men were to attend it, and all Israel went up to Kirjath-jearim "to bring up thence the ark of God the Lord, that dwelleth between the cherubims, whose name is called on it." It

was an occasion of great joy, and as "David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets," they little anticipated that the bright sunshine of their joy was so soon to be darkened by the judgment of God. To bring the ark to mount Zion was a laudable thing; but if brought, it must be brought in God's way. He had given special directions in His word as to how the ark was to be transported (Num. iv.); but David and his people were acting as if these instructions had never been written, and indeed were in distinct transgression. The consequence was that God came in and judged them; for when Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark (which none but the priests or Levites were ever to touch) "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza, and He smote him, because he put his hand to the ark and there he died before God." The lesson was not lost upon the king; for though he was displeased at the time, he confessed afterwards, when he commanded the Levites to sanctify themselves, to bring up the ark, "The Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought Him not *after the due order*." (1 Chron. xv. 12.)

Other examples might easily be collected (such as Nadab and Abihu offering their strange fire; Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, intruding themselves into the priesthood; and king Uzziah offering incense, &c.), but this will suffice to show that God is not indifferent to the maintenance of His order in everything connected with His worship. It is a lesson we may well lay to heart, and one which should furnish us with ground for much searching of heart in regard to the Church of God; for we cannot be too often reminded that we

must not "go up by steps unto God's altar." Nothing must be adopted for expediency, convenience, or adornment in His worship. The true worshippers must worship Him in spirit and in truth—this is the only "due order" of this dispensation.

God's order in teaching is no less distinctly indicated. "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve." (1 Tim. ii. 11–13.) And it is not without significance that the instruction as to the Lord's Supper and the assembly (1 Cor. xi.–xiv.) should be prefaced by a statement of the relative position of the man to Christ, and of the woman to the man. There are many great and blessed fields of service inviting the activity of Christian women—fields that none but they can occupy, and in which there is abundant room for their utmost devotedness to the glory of their Lord; but there is an absolute prohibition to their assumption of teaching. The charge the Lord brought against the angel of the Church of Thyatira is, "Thou sufferest that woman (or thy wife) Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servant." In any such case it is a violation of God's order, and indeed the vessel is not adapted to the work. In her own sphere, and in such services as are suited, the woman is unrivalled. Her lively and absorbing affections, the quickness of her spiritual instincts, and, we may add, her spiritual discernment and tact, mark her out for labours for which the man has but slender, if any, qualifications. But should she be tempted to forsake her own sphere, and to take up, in disregard of the Scripture, the responsibility of teaching, confusion of

truth, if not positive errors in doctrine and practice, will soon be the speedy result. The daughter of Philip, who prophesied before either the gospels or epistles were written, and, as it would seem, in their father's house, are no example now to Christian women, except in so far as they show that in the privacy of home the Lord may often use the woman as the channel for the communication of His mind to the family.

In government likewise there is to be the most careful adherence to God's order. Thus in the epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus we have the most minute details given of the qualifications of those who may take the place of rule (elders or bishops), or that of a special service (deacons). And if there is no apostolic power now present to appoint either the one or the other, the more careful we ought to be to insist on the possession of the qualifications. Believers themselves, as well as those who have the lead in the assembly, should have more conscience on this subject in their united desire that the authority of the Lord alone should be maintained as expressed in His word. Even in apostolic days self-will found expression, as, for example, in the case of Diotrephes. He was one who sought to govern according to his own will, instead of according to the word of God. Hence he would even shut out an apostle from the saints, looking upon them as his property, instead of the Lord's. But if the Lord sent any of His servants, it was a solemn thing for Diotrephes to exclude them, and even those who would receive them, on the ground of his own feeling or inclinations, and hence the solemn condemnation pronounced upon Him by the apostle. (3 John.)

In the Old Testament there are two remarkable cases

of abuse of government. Both Eli's sons and the sons of Samuel seemed to have used their place for their own ends, and to corrupt the people. To speak more exactly, they derived their influence from their relationship to Eli and to Samuel. The priesthood was hereditary, the judgeship not; but Eli's fault was that he abandoned his authority to his sons, and did not restrain them when they made themselves vile. (1 Sam. iii. 13.) And how often is it the case that relatives are allowed to usurp the place and authority of the one with whom they are connected, and who himself may rightly occupy a position of rule. For him to act would be according to God; but he cannot delegate his responsibility, and if his relatives act in his place, it must not only violate God's order, but it will also, as a consequence, introduce confusion and disorder.

Our readers can pursue the subject for themselves, and the more they investigate it the more they will be convinced that the Lord's honour and our blessing are intimately bound up with the maintenance in every way, both in the family and in the Church, of God's order. E. D.

THE NIGHT OF THIS WORLD.

"IT is high time to awake out of sleep; for our salvation is nearer than when we believed." The night of this world is the absence of the Sun of righteousness. Let us clearly conceive this. In the busy and pleasure-seeking course of this world, for him who has understanding, and to whom Christ is known, it is still night. The gloom of night is over it, but the day has dawned to his faith; the Morning Star is arisen in his heart,

out the world is asleep in the still-continuing darkness of night; for indeed the night is far spent, but the world is asleep in the night. The waking soul sees, in the horizon the Morning Star, the dawn along its edge, and waits for day. The heart is in the day, and walks as in the day. As Christians we have done with works of darkness. In conflict we are still, but our armour against evil, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, is the light in which we walk. The power of light, and truth, and godliness, and judgment of evil, which belongs to that day, is in our heart, and the weapons and snares of darkness are foiled and detected, getting no entrance into, no hold on, the soul. We walk honestly as in the day; we put on in our ways and heart the walk and character of Him who is the true light of it, the Lord Jesus Christ. Having the hope of being like Him there, we purify ourselves as He is pure; we walk as He walked. We do not provide for the lusts of the nature which belongs to the darkness to satisfy it, but walk as Christ walked. Such is the Christian in view of Christ's coming, and bringing on this dark and benighted world the light and day of God in His effectual power, and are the two springs and characters of Christian conduct—recognition of, acting up to, every relative duty in love, and knowing the time, the near approach of day to which he belongs. (Compare 1 Thess. v.) "The night is far spent, the day is at hand."

J. N. D.

WHILST the eye is gazing with delight on Christ in glory, the Holy Spirit is engraving the Christ we delight in on our hearts.

THE CHIEF CORNER STONE.

ehold, I lay in Sion a Chief Corner Stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded."

'The Stone which the builders rejected is become the Head of the Corner."

CAN foundation *greater* be,
Crowned with shouts of victory?
Great in God, prepared above,
Laid in Jesus' quenchless love.
Great in Jordan's judgment-sea,
When He purged iniquity,
When He gave His life and fell,
When He rose His "power" to tell,
Conqu'ring sin, and death, and hell;
Ascending thence to claim His own,
His crown of joy the Father's throne,
Himself the precious Corner Stone.

Can foundation *surer* be
Than the Lamb on Calvary?
When He bore the wrathful load,
Sin and sentence there from God?
Sacrificed for sin and guilt,
When His precious blood was spilt,
There the Lamb, devoted, dies,
God's redeeming sacrifice;
Sin of ages to atone,
All was laid on Him alone,
Tried and sure Foundation Stone.

Can foundation *richer* be
Than redemption's treasury?

Vast the "sum" therein enrolled,
"Precious thoughts" of priceless gold,
Not the half hath yet been told;
Rich the Father's count of grace,
Reck'ning all the ransomed race;
Promise of prophetic lines,
Bright the ransom-glory shines
(Glory of eternal times),
Ransom found of richest name,
Found in God's provided Lamb.
Called in judgment to the tree,
Nothing spares the penalty;
His elect, anointed Son
Dies, the just for those undone.
There the streams of life must flow,
Blood of One the purchased know,
Blood—remitting sins below.
By His passion on the tree,
By His passion's penalty;
Bondsman He, for debt He dies,
Surety bound in sacrifice;
Richest ransom-payment He,
None so rich, so poor, could be,
Himself the suffering Surety—
Priceless gift of God alone,
Chief and costly Corner Stone.

Can foundation *dearer* be
Than His priestly sympathy?
Gone within the holy place,
Tender there in needed grace;
Touched with pity, next of kin,
On His breast He bears us in;
In His hands and side we see
Wounds that tell of Calvary;

The crucified, rejected One
Declared with power upon the throne
The Son of God, the Corner Stone.

Can foundation *deeper* be,
Deeper than eternity?
Not the whirlwind's wildest roar,
Beating on that boundless shore,
Nor the raging waterflood,
Mars the merit of His blood.
Sooner Jesus' promise fail
Than the gates of hell prevail;
Victim He Himself alone,
God's Foundation Corner Stone. C. F. C.

THE TABERNACLE AND THE ALTAR.

WE have seen that faith accepts simply and unquestioningly the position God in His infinite grace has given us. But it does more; looking alone to God, and occupied with Him, it searches into things in which man's mind cannot follow it, and enjoys them really whilst waiting for the day when knowledge will also be made perfect. Now we know only in part, but we *believe* things we do not yet see, and we can rejoice in them with joy unspeakable and full of glory. (1 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 Peter i. 7–12.)

The same principle appears in the song of victory, sung by the Israelites at the Red Sea; we find used there for the first time two expressions which were full of deep meaning for the children of Israel, and of which they were afterwards called to understand something

practically. The first of these expressions is in verse 13, "Thy *holy* habitation." It was the response of faith to the work of God already accomplished in the deliverance of His people, as we find in verse 2, "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an *habitation*."* The faith of Moses and of the children of Israel had laid hold of the great fact that redemption had brought them near to God, and that He would dwell in their midst. This word is found again, in connection with the future blessing of the nation, when Zion will be in very truth for Jehovah a "habitation of justice and mountain of holiness." (Jer. xxxi. 23; Ps. ii. 6, &c.)

The second expression, used also for the first time in this song, is "the sanctuary" (*v.* 17), and it evidently alludes to the holy place which God purposed to have built for Himself—in the midst of His people and in the "mountain of His inheritance," in the land of promise. But God anticipated this blessing in the wilderness, and gave directions to His people to make Him a sanctuary, that He might dwell among them. This sanctuary was also called the "tabernacle," a word which properly means "a dwelling-place." God said *to* Moses, "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them; according to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the *tabernacle*, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it." (Exod. xxv. 8, 9.) This earthly tabernacle, "the figure and shadow of heavenly things," served to make known,

* This translation may well be doubted. The thought of dwelling in the midst of His people came from Jehovah Himself. (See below.) —Ed.

by means of the details of its arrangement and order, what was implied in the fact of God dwelling in the midst of His people. It was made after the pattern of things in the heavens, so that the holy places, made with hands, were the figures or, more correctly, the copies of the true. (Heb. viii. 5; ix. 24.)

The two expressions of which we have spoken are closely linked together; the *first* showing that, as a result of redemption, God will dwell in the midst of His people—a thing which had become impossible from the moment that the sin of our first parents had put an end to communion with God; the *second* giving us to understand that God intended that His dwelling-place should have a material form, so as to teach us in connection with it what was involved in His dwelling with His redeemed people.

The tabernacle constructed in the wilderness gave place after a time to the temple built by Solomon at Jerusalem. This in its turn passed away, but the heavenly things themselves, of which the tabernacle was the "copy," remain for ever, and God enables us to grasp their meaning by means of the earthly figures. The rest of God, which His people are called to enjoy, is spoken of as "remaining," or being in reserve; but in the meanwhile the Holy Spirit introduces the redeemed into the knowledge of the heavenly things not seen as yet, so that we may enjoy them by faith, even more than the children of Israel could enjoy the presence of God among them whilst they were in the wilderness, previous to their entering into the rest prepared for them around God's holy mountain, in the land of Canaan. It is the property of faith, led by the Holy Spirit, to lay hold on unseen things, and to

where stood the ark and mercy-seat of Jehovah. (Compare Heb. iv. 16.) The spiritual meaning of the expiatory service of that day is unfolded in detail in Heb. ix., where the Holy Ghost gives it a prominent place as one of the most remarkable types of the work of Christ. The divine directions as to this particular sacrifice for all the succeeding generations of the children of Israel are summed up in the words, "The priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes the holy garments: and he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. And this shall be a statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year." (Lev. xvi. 32–34.) "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb. ix. 22.) God was making known by these types that it was only at such a cost that sins could be forgiven. (See particularly Lev. iv. v.) Jehovah's command to His people was clear and explicit. He had given them the blood upon the altar to make atonement for their souls. "For it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." (Lev. xvii. 11.) Was it not saying again in principle as before in Egypt, "When I see the blood I will pass over you"?

These, as we have already said, were only *types;* for in truth the blood of bulls and goats could not take away man's sins. (Heb. x. 4.) But these types very clearly and simply established the grand principle, as they shadowed forth the perfect sacrifice that has

know been offered once for all, even that of our Lord Jesus Christ. "When He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God." (Heb. x. 5, 7; Ps. xl. 6–8.) He gave Himself for us. "Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place" (that is to say, 'into heaven itself'), "having obtained *eternal redemption.*" (Heb. ix. 11, 12.) But we are not left to guess the meaning of the Old Testament types. The positive teaching of the New Testament makes God's thought and intention perfectly clear. He does not leave us in uncertainty. By virtue of redemption all believers now become the temple of the living God, so that He says, "I will dwell in the midst of them." On the one hand the holiness of God requires that sin should be completely taken away; and on the other He vouchsafes to us a good conscience, that we may be truly happy and at peace with Him, knowing that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. (2 Cor. vi. 16; 1 John i. 7.)

The close of the prophecy of Ezekiel states that in the last days the service of the house of God and of the altar will be set up again for the children of Israel. (Chap. xl. 45, 46; xliv. 15, 16, &c.) This memorial of the great sacrifice, which is the foundation of all divine blessing for sinners such as we are, will be needful for the people during Messiah's reign. Something else than

the mere putting forth of Almighty power is needed for taking away that which hinders our enjoyment of communion with Him in holiness. There must be righteous expiation of sin in order that His righteousness may be satisfied. This expiation has now been accomplished. The blood of the new covenant that God makes with Israel in view of their future day of blessing has been already shed. All that is written must yet be accomplished for this people who are now unbelieving, but, notwithstanding all, beloved of God for the fathers' sakes. (Rom. xi. 28.) Still, while waiting the moment of Israel's blessing, and that of the whole earth through the intermediary of this chosen people, we Christians are called to enjoy a still more intimate communion with the God of all grace in accordance with the actual position of the Saviour at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He is head of the house of God, as Son, in the heavens, and we are His house, "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." (Heb. iii. 6.) The Holy Spirit makes present and real even now—by faith and to faith—the glorious things which we shall fully enjoy when we shall see the Lord as He is, and when He shall cause us to enter into the "rest that remains for the people of God." God already takes us as His people. He reveals Himself to us as Father, and calls us "His sons and daughters;" for it is the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father who has made God known to us. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. xi. 16–18; vii. 1.)

And let us not forget either that each Christian is

regarded as *individually* a temple in which the Spirit of God dwells. It is written, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.) In this passage we see again how closely linked are the thoughts of redemption and of the habitation of God with His people.

Jesus Christ is the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." The full result of His expiatory work will be seen in the new heavens and the new earth, in which righteousness will dwell. (2 Peter iii. 13.) Then sin will exist no more. "The tabernacle of God will be with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." (Rev. xxi. 3.) The Holy Spirit leads the believer even now into the spiritual enjoyment of these things; for the blood of Christ, which is the divine basis of all these blessings, has already been shed. Consequently we find the same expression made use of in speaking of the eternal state of blessing as of what is already true of the believer. "I make all things new." (Rev. xxi. 5; 2 Cor. v. 17.) We have that for our present spiritual portion in view of the coming glory, when all will be manifested according to God's purpose, and faith will give place to sight. In view of this the Spirit exhorts us: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found in Him in peace, without spot, and blameless." (2 Peter iii. 14.)

W. J. L.

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

PAUL'S first imprisonment in Rome was now drawing to a close (ii. 24), though as yet he had not stood before the bar of the emperor Nero, to whose judgment he had appealed when arraigned before Festus at Cæsarea. Meanwhile the Philippian saints, profiting by the departure of Epaphroditus to Paul, sent him a substantial token of their love and fellowship in the gospel (iv. 18); and Paul, reciprocating their kindness, not then for the first time manifested (iv. 15, 16), wrote this letter to be conveyed to them by Epaphroditus, his brother, fellow-workman, and fellow-soldier, but their messenger and minister to his wants. Truly he was not long in their debt; for the return he gave them, all must have felt, far more than compensated for that which they had expended upon him. Each, however, did their part. They ministered to his temporal need; he ministered of Christ to their souls, and described the token of their love as an odour of sweet savour, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. (iv. 18.) Their ministry to the apostle betokened the activity of Christian life in them. So writing to these saints he dwells on that theme; hence the epistle is hortatory and practical, the affection of his heart for them being plainly manifested. (iv. 1.) The occasion and probable date of the epistle briefly noticed, let us now look at its contents.

As in the epistles to the Thessalonians, and in that to Philemon, so in this one, Paul does not present him-

self in his apostolic character; but conjoining Timothy with himself as a servant of Christ Jesus, he writes to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi with the bishops and deacons, wishing them all grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (i. 1, 2.) The Philippian assembly was evidently well provided with office bearers; and the mention of bishops here, and in Acts xx. 28, proves that the notion of episcopacy current in modern days derives no support from the practice of the apostles. Both in Europe and in Asia there could be more than one bishop in the same assembly. Grace and peace he wished them; for they are always needed. None knew that better than Paul; and the source of grace being opened up to God's saints, and the God of peace being their God, he could express his wishes for the continued outflow to them of grace, and the constant ministry of peace; for the peace here spoken of is not peace of conscience, but peace of heart—the peace of Christ, that which He gave His people, and which, writing to the Colossian saints, Paul desired should rule in their hearts.

But more, he could give thanks for them, and he did. Years had passed since he had seen them, but he had not forgotten them. "I thank my God," he writes, "upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now." Fellowship in the gospel had always characterized that assembly. (iv. 15.) It characterized it still. (i. 7; iv. 14.) Now, that fellowship betokened not only love to him, but a real work of grace in their souls—a work commenced, instrumentally, by Paul and his company (Acts xvi. 13), but really by God, who will perfect

in His goodness that which He has begun in His grace. To Him, then, Paul turns for confidence about the saints: "Being confident of this one thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Christ Jesus." (*v.* 6.) And to the furtherance of Paul's joy, he had not to rest simply on the remembrance of that which they once had been in the first fervour of their love; for the coming of Epaphroditus with their tribute of affection told him of their continued interest in him, and in the work of God with which he was so closely associated. So he points to that as a further proof of the reality of their conversion. "Even," he writes, "as it is right for me to think this of you all, because you have me in your heart;* inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye are all partakers of my grace." Happy Paul, to have such continued evidence of the fruitfulness of his labours among them. Blessed too surely they were who furnished such proofs. Deeds, not words merely, was it with them. And what honour was put on them to have fellowship with Paul in the grace of furthering the interests of Christ and the kingdom of God! They were not ashamed of him, the prisoner. They identified themselves with him.

Thus the energy of Christian life was displayed in them. So he was confident about them, their unabated affection to him confirming it, and his longing desire after them in the bowels of Christ Jesus strengthening it. (*v.* 8.) And that earnest desire on his part found expression in prayer to God (*vv.* 9–11), that their love might abound yet more and more in full knowledge,

* So we should read the clause.

and in all judgment, or perception, so as to approve the things that are more excellent; that they might be sincere * and without offence unto the day of Christ; being filled with the fruit of righteousness, which is by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. Nothing short of this would satisfy him. After this he tells them how the work of God was progressing in Rome, and what he was assured was the Lord's mind concerning himself. Then manifesting his interest in them, he turns round to encourage their hearts in the circumstances in which they were placed, and to minister what he saw was the truth suited for them. Such is a brief summary of this short but most valuable letter.

How refreshing it must have been to him, instead of having to meet something wrong at Philippi, to tell them of that which was going forward in Rome! He would have them know that what had happened unto him had fallen out rather for the furtherance of the gospel. It was seen now in all the Pretorium,† and to all others, that instead of his being a malefactor, he was really a prisoner for Christ. In the camp, in the palace, in the city, it was apparent that a testimony was going forth which had Christ for its subject, and of which Paul was the marked exponent and witness. Besides this, the greater part of the brethren, having confidence in the Lord through his bonds, were much more bold to speak the Word without fear. Thus labourers multiplied, and that in Rome itself, and before any sentence from the emperor had been given in his favour. It was

* *εἰλικρινής*, lit. examined by the sun's light; hence genuine, pure. It occurs also in 2 Peter iii. 1.

† The large camp situated outside the city walls.

not that a few were emboldened, but the mass of them —the many. They spoke, they preached. If then the apostle's mouth was at present shut, the mouths of many were opened, and Christ was proclaimed.

Yet all were not sincere in this work. Some indeed preached Christ of love, knowing that Paul was set for the defence of the gospel; but others, animated by personal hostility to him, preached Christ of contention, supposing to add affliction to his bonds. Who were these? it may be asked. Their names have for centuries been wrapped in obscurity; whilst he, to whose bonds they sought to add affliction, is widely owned as one of the most devoted and most honoured servants of that Lord, whom they also professed to serve; for it was Christ who was preached. Hence Paul could rejoice, and did rejoice. And looking beyond the motives of those who preached Christ, yet not sincerely, he saw the advancement of God's kingdom, which means the final triumph of Christ. Hence he knew it would turn to his salvation through their supplication, and the supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus, "according," as he adds, "to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed; but in all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die gain." Yet to live in the flesh was worth the while. Personally, however, he would be a gainer by death. What then should he choose? His gain, or the saints' profit? Coming to that point his choice is made. To abide in the flesh was more needful for them. Hence he knew, and could announce beforehand, the successful issue of his appeal to the emperor, since their joy, and the furtherance of their faith, would be promoted

by his being again among them, that their boasting might abound in Christ Jesus through him by his presence with them at Philippi. What unselfishness was this! The interests of Christ, and those of His saints, in this governed him.

How completely was the enemy baffled as regards Paul. The preaching of Christ not sincerely did not oppress him, however much he might have grieved over those who did it. Death in prospect did not trouble him. To live too was for Paul to serve Christ. Over such an one the enemy by these assaults could gain no advantage.

Turning now to the Philippians, Paul would seek in the power of the Spirit to foil the attempts of Satan to dishearten those whom he loved so well. (*vv.* 27–30.) Their interest in him he owned, and had responded to. He would make manifest his unabated interest in them. "Only," he writes, "let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of the Christ." For this he was anxious. There was a manner of life in harmony with it. That he desired they should evidence. But before developing this, he makes plain the satisfaction it would give him, whether of seeing them or hearing of them, to learn that they stood fast in one spirit, with one soul striving together for or with the faith of the gospel. In what nobler contest could they be engaged? How many an ardent person has been nerved to deeds of heroism by the spirit of patriotism? But the love of one's country, unless the interests of Christ are connected with it, can be but of passing importance. A true interest in the gospel and in its conflicts is a very different matter. It was this last that he desired to have strengthened in their souls. And to this end he encouraged them not

should the Holy Ghost be the faithful and official witness to the refused One of earth, glorified at God's right hand, in which testimony the saints are clearly embraced also, as the Lord graciously added to His disciples, "And ye also shall bear witness."

Lastly, in xvi. 7 we have for the fourth time the Comforter named, and there it is in His relation to the world. In connection with this is the statement, that of such importance was His advent, that it was expedient for them that the blessed Lord should retire, that He might send Him unto them. It was unto them He should be given, unto them He should be sent. He should not be given or be sent unto the world as Christ had been (only to be rejected by it), but to them alone; yet He should have a relation and aspect towards the world, but it would be purely judicial. He should convict or fasten home its guilt upon it. The presence of the Lord Jesus in the world had been the testimony of God's love to it; the presence of the Holy Ghost (none the less real though unknown by it) should be of an opposite character. It is no longer testimony given in grace to the world, but given to the saints against it. The world is convicted of having refused and slain Him who came in grace to it, and is branded with its guilt. This the Holy Ghost's presence attests. God's grace and mercy were to be presented, and His goodness displayed, for eighteen centuries or more; but the reconciliation of the world as such is no longer contemplated. Its day of visitation had passed. Thenceforth it was the election of grace according to the sovereign goodness of God. It should be individuals only, picked up and saved *out of* the world, that His grace embraced. But as to the world itself, its *sin* was fastened on it because

from the glory to the cross and to the grave; His exaltation is also described, the attestation of God's marked approval of Him who emptied Himself. Hence the Lord is brought before us as an example, an example none can equal; for no one has come from the height of glory to the death of the cross, and to the grave, but He who voluntarily stooped so low. Now if the Master thus stooped, if He who is our life could thus act, lowly thoughts of self and care for others should be exemplified in each one of us who are His. We learn what He did. We are reminded too in what light God regards it. Never throughout eternity shall any intelligent creature, whether lost or saved, be allowed to forget the humiliation of the Son of God, or to refuse the rendering of homage at the mention of that name given Him before His birth by the angel.

With the example of the Lord thus set before them, these saints were exhorted to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling; for it was God who worked in them the willing and the working effectually of His good pleasure. All the energy came from Him, and He bestowed it on them. Hence there was no reason to slacken their work because Paul was not with them. God worked in them both the willing and the doing, wherever the apostle might be. Thus furnished with all that they needed, they were responsible to use it. (*vv.* 12, 13.) Further, he reminded them that they were God's children, and fruit of his labour. He would have them therefore to be blameless and harmless, irreproachable children* of God, and really light-

* *Children* (τέκνα), not *sons* (υἱοὶ), is the term here employed. He was speaking of the activity of the nature; hence the birth-tie was the thought before him.

bearers in the world, holding forth the word of life, so as to be Paul's boast in the day of Christ that he had not run in vain nor laboured in vain.

What a standard was set before them in the example of the Master! Who can look at it? some may ask. Who has attempted to follow it? others may enquire. We learn as the answer to such questions how Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, each in their own way, had evidently profited by it, the Spirit of Christ being displayed in these devoted servants of God, each of whom traded with the pound entrusted to him, and with the talents given to him. Had God's glory and the welfare of souls moved the Lord to humble Himself even to death? Paul, learning of the Master, was ready to suffer martyrdom if needed (*v.* 17), and would deprive himself of the comfort of Epaphroditus's presence and service to further the joy of these beloved Philippian saints. (*v.* 28.) In Timothy was developed the true spirit of service in the gospel. He sought the things of Christ Jesus, and showed a genuine interest in the welfare of the Philippians. (*vv.* 19–22.) Epaphroditus was characterized by devotion in personal service to Paul (*v.* 30), and by unfeigned love for his brethren at Philippi. (*v.* 26.) Thus each of these in their own way illustrated the working of the life of God in the soul. Beautiful pictures of Christian self-denial—making God's interests and those of the saints the real objects. C. E. S.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

WHEN God comes into a house, people and things fall into their right places.

THE COMFORTER.

It can scarcely have escaped the notice of every thoughtful reader of Scripture, that the writings of John exhibit more than any other the personality of the divine persons in the Godhead. It is this apostle who gives us the fullest revelation of the Father, especially in the gospel history which bears his name. It is he also who gives us the most exalted revelation of the Son, especially in his primary epistle. And again, it is to his writings that we turn for the richest revelation of the Holy Ghost—in the gospel as the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, the Comforter; in the epistles as the anointing, the unction from the Holy One; and in Revelation as the seven Spirits which are before the throne, and the seven Spirits of God which are sent forth into all the earth.

We are so familiar with these writings of John, and practically they constitute so large and important a part of Scripture to our souls, that it is no less interesting than important for us to remember, that for a period extending to nearly forty years after the death of Christ they had no existence; and that consequently not only all the other apostles and disciples of the Lord, but the bulk of the saints who formed the Church when it began at Pentecost, had in all probability fallen asleep before the earliest of them, the epistles, were written. What an hiatus in divine truth, and in our apprehension of it, should *we* experience were we bereft of what we have received from these

writings. It will thus be evident that their remarkable character is rendered still more remarkable by the lateness of their date as compared with the rest of the New Testament, and the place which God has assigned them as constituting the close of His revelation of Himself and His counsels. And if "the disciple which testifieth of these things" has not indeed himself tarried until the Lord come, yet "his testimony" very emphatically conducts us onward to, and leaves us in full view of, that one only goal of our hopes; and it closes by dropping into our hearts the Lord's otherwhere unrecorded words about it, to linger with us as a sweet memory until "cloudless morning breaks."

Paul and Peter (if we may trust the ordinary chronology) appear to have both closed their writings (2 Timothy and 2 Peter) in the same year; and in the next, or in the one following that, to have each sealed his testimony in the blood of martyrdom. At this time, though, as he says (3 John 13), he "had many things to write," John had not yet taken up his pen. Thus it appears that neither Paul nor Peter was privileged to feed upon the incomparable revelation of the persons of the Godhead as specifically given through him. If we mentally run over the scenes and circumstances in the Lord's life (nowhere recorded but in John's gospel) the discourses of the Lord and His prayer to His Father (nowhere else found), and to these we add the teachings of his epistles and the prophecies, &c., in Revelation, we cannot fail to recognize the stupendous value of this codicil to the other writings of the New Testament, this post-Pauline after-gift, if we may so speak, to the Church of God

through the inspiration which wrought in "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

How far Peter's personal knowledge of the Lord's life &c., and how far the revelations personally made to Paul, did in their case supply the lack of these writings subsequently given to the Church, we may not venture to say. But it is clear that not one word of the writings of this beloved apostle and witness of Christ, so familiar to us and to the saints of eighteen centuries preceding us, was ever perused by Peter or by Paul. How it should enhance our apprehension of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the good pleasure of God in us, that we should have been constituted possessors of so matchless a heritage of truth, never revealed to them, or, if revealed, given to them only for their personal blessing and joy, and excluded from their testimony, as in like manner the whole of the apostles may have had the revelation of the Church, while for testimony it was reserved to Paul.

About two years, it seems, after those apostles had finished their course, and just before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, John wrote his epistles. Not only was the Church in ruins, but the holy city and the temple were about to be rased to the ground. How fitting it was that the Spirit of God should move the last surviving apostle to present more saliently than ever before the glories of the incarnate Son, now that "that which was from the beginning" had become so much more evidently the only unchanging resource for the saints! After bestowing upon the Church of God these precious scriptures, the Spirit of God kept silence as to revelation for a space of about thirty years, and then during his banishment in Patmos "the prisoner of

so near the Lord (as many of His people do now, must we not conclude, for the contrary reason?); but he was fully sensible also of being certainly, if not primarily, responsible for his own individual state. "Every man ought to know how to possess his vessel unto sanctification and honour." Oppression from without by no means precludes danger from within; and when it calls into activity mutual sympathies, which draw saints together, there is also danger of ignoring individual title to personal belongings, which both the apostles Peter and Paul were careful to maintain. (Acts v. 4; 2 Cor. viii. 17, &c.)

Then, lastly, "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus." There is an immense difference between being appointed to afflictions and being appointed to wrath. The former is our lot, as we have seen; but, thank God, not the latter. Wrath would be the portion of those who helped on the afflictions of God's poor people, as we see by the next chapter; but already wrath was upon those who believed not the Son (John iii. 36), and opposed His gospel. (1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.) It will be experienced by-and-by in inexpressible bitterness by "them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. iii. 10, xvi.), by Israel in particular (Psalm lxxxix. 38–46; xc. 5–14) during "the day of Jacob's trouble," though mercy intervene to rescue some from the dire extremity—eternal judgment. (Isaiah xl. 2.) This period terminates with the Lord's coming "as a thief in the night," the day of the Lord, ushered in, as it will be, by judgment. There were then those who took occasion, by the afflictions of the Thessalonians, to rob them of the Christian's hope, assuming that the afflictions were wrath poured out,

which falsified the character of God's dealings with His children, and arguing from this, that the only prospect before them was "the coming" referred to above. The apostle therefore rebuts this deception by the most blessed, detailed, and exhaustive statement of the Christian's hope we have in Scripture. He re-assures the saints in a double way. *We* are *not appointed unto wrath, but to obtain salvation*, just as in Christ we are under grace, not under the law as Israel is, who will reap the terrible consequences of it by-and-by. We have not realized salvation yet, though "our own" (Phil. ii. 12) in title, sure as the precious blood of Christ could make it. It is still future, though objectively with the eye upon Him unveiled in glory. We have it even now in more than title; for He Himself is the measure of it, inasmuch as we shall be *like Him*. Little of His glory and preciousness have we yet apprehended, and in proportion as we apprehend we appropriate; but when we are brought so near that we can see Him as He is, and see nothing of ourselves, transformation will have been complete; we shall have "attained," reached perfection subjectively. Nor yet that the process must be according to the present rate, thank God. Oh, how slow! We are to *obtain* salvation "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." This is our hope, blessed be God! Not to wait on earth till the Lord Jesus comes in judgment, but to have our everlasting portion in His presence, and to judge with Him when He appears, having been taken away meanwhile "to meet Him in the air."

T. K.

EXPOSITORY JOTTINGS.

I. "THE TESTIMONY OF OUR LORD."

(2 Tim. i. 8.)

It has long since been pointed out, that the proclamation of accepted truths involves no reproach. Even worldly men and politicians will contend for popular creeds, and, like Demetrius, the Ephesian, will not hesitate to rouse the passions of the multitudes in their defence. It is new truth—whether for the first time revealed, or recovered after having been long ignored or forgotten—which tests the heart and excites its enmity, and which therefore requires courage on the part of its heralds. This fact will explain the special exhortations addressed to Timothy in this chapter. Some have thought that timidity, or even cowardice, was his peculiar snare. Be this as it may, very clearly he needed no common boldness and endurance in the accomplishment of the mission with which he had been entrusted, and for this very reason, that his work was in connection with "the testimony of our Lord."

What then are we to understand by this term? Is it to be confined to the truth of "the mystery of Christ"? (Eph. iii. 4.) All will admit that this was the special ministry confided to Paul, while Colossians i. makes it plain that it was not the whole of his ministry. It will be perceived that the apostle uses the term "gospel" in this same scripture as co-extensive with "the testimony of our Lord," and he connects this again with God's "purpose and grace, which was given

us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel: whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles." (*vv.* 8–11.) "The testimony of our Lord" could not therefore embrace less than the whole ministry of the apostle, which he often expresses in the one term "the gospel," or "my gospel." (See 1 Tim. i. 11; 2 Tim. ii. 8.) But then the far-reaching significance of "the gospel" in the apostle's mouth must be carefully borne in mind. It is so narrowed in our conceptions from its popular use that we are apt to forget what "the gospel" implies. It is a term that will include what we understand as "the gospel of the grace of God," and "the gospel of the glory," according to 2 Cor. iv., a gospel, which, in its fullest expression and consequences, contains the truth of the body of Christ. For the knowledge of the glory of Christ on high, the fact that He is glorified as man at the right hand of God, is fundamentally requisite to the truth of the mystery. As the glorified man, He is the Head of the body, and it is through the reception of the Holy Ghost by those who have believed the gospel (Eph. i. 12)—thus sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise—that souls are united to Christ, and made members of His body.

Such then was "the testimony of our Lord;" and it is easy to perceive how its proclamation would stir up the fanatical prejudices of the Jew, as well as excite the opposition of Jewish believers. Peter preached that God had made that same Jesus, whom the Jews had crucified, both Lord and Christ; but this testimony,

if received, was in no way, in and by itself, destructive of the special privileges of the Jewish nation. Nay, in Acts iii. Peter tells them, in the long-suffering grace of God, that, if they will repent, God would send back Jesus Christ to them. But Paul's testimony annulled all distinction between Jews and Gentiles, and he plainly declared, again and again, that in Christ there is "neither Greek nor Jew," &c. (Col. iii. 11; see also Eph. i. iii.)

We can well understand therefore that the apostle might need to exhort Timothy to stir up his gift, to remind him that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind;" and to exhort him not to be "ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner," because, as we have seen, identification with such a ministry must entail incessant reproach and persecution. Nor will it be less so now when Paul's testimony is fully declared. Keep back part of it, make something of man, and you may be a popular preacher even in Christendom. Declare it fully—the truth of Christ's rejection, and of His glory at the right hand of God; the consequent end of man, and the judgment of the world in the cross; the truth of Christianity, involving the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth, and the union of believers to Christ by the Holy Spirit, together with the heavenly calling and waiting for God's Son from heaven, and you must still be accounted "as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things."

It should, however, be distinctly remarked, that this testimony could never be divinely rendered unless the state of the witness answered in some measure to it. The testimony itself is purely objective; *i.e.* an external

thing; but a sadder exhibition could not be witnessed than a falsification of the truth by the life and associations of any who proclaimed it.

One interesting particular remains to be noticed. "Be not thou therefore ashamed," says the apostle, "of the testimony of our Lord, *nor of me His prisoner*." The connection of these two things is most significant. Paul was so completely identified with "the testimony of our Lord" as to make it impossible to accept the one without the other. To profess to receive the testimony, and at the same time to be ashamed of him who was the Lord's prisoner on account of it, would but be an evidence of insincerity and unreality. And yet how often is it the case that truths are avowedly held, and even delighted in, while the standard-bearers of those very truths are condemned and proscribed, and in some cases the light which has thus been received is used to cover with reproach the vessels through whom the light has shone. (See Phil. i. 15, 16.) Such conduct may satisfy man, but it can never be pleasing to the Lord. His witnesses are as sacred in His eyes as the testimony they bear. He thus said to His disciples, on the eve of His departure from them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me." (John xiii. 20.) There are many Christians to-day who would not hesitate to receive "the testimony of our Lord" if they might be ashamed of the cross connected with it; viz., identification with those who bear the testimony. But God has joined the two things together; and if we separate them, we can neither be under the power of the truth itself nor in fellowship with His own mind.

II. THE ATTRACTION OF POWER.

(2 Chronicles xv. 8, 9.)

After the separation between Israel and Judah, it was impossible that there could be true peace and amity between the two kingdoms. Jeroboam immediately discerned where his danger lay. Judah had the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, where God dwelt between the cherubim, and where alone the perpetual burnt-offering as well as the other sacrifices could be presented, and where only the divinely-appointed priests could draw nigh to God on behalf of the people. The ten tribes were aware of this fact as well as their king, and fearing lest the kingdom should return to the house of David, Jeroboam said in his heart, "If this people go up to sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their Lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." (1 Kings xii. 26–28.) This was a bold and clever, though selfish, project, but one which, reminiscent as it was of the apostasy of Israel in the wilderness, ought to have excited their determined opposition. But so far from this being the case, they readily fell in with the thought of the king, and straightway they had priests and feasts after the pattern of those which had been divinely instituted. The new religion of Israel was one of imitation, leaving God out of the question. Henceforward there were the two religions side by

side—the one founded upon the word of God, and the other, whatever its pretences, simply idolatrous. In the reign of Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, there was war between him and Jeroboam, and on the eve of the battle Abijah appealed to the consciences of the men of Israel, and used with great force the argument, that whilst Israel had forsaken Jehovah, Judah still clave to Him, and had the true priesthood and sacrifices. Jeroboam answered his appeal by strategy; *i.e.* by seeking, through human methods in the art of war, to accomplish the overthrow of Judah. But Judah cried unto the Lord, and the priests sounded with their trumpets (see Numbers x.), and God delivered the Israelites into their hand. (2 Chron. xiii. 4–20.) *The Lord's presence was thus the source of Judah's strength and victory.* And it should be carefully noted that no pretensions, however lofty, and no human wisdom, however clever in its method, can either command the presence of the Lord, or deliver in the time of danger.

Passing now to the reign of Asa, the son of Abijah, another striking lesson is recorded. Asa, on the whole, did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God (1 Chron. xiv. 2), and blessing therefore marked the time of his reign. Listening to the exhortation and counsel of the prophet Azariah, the son of Oded, "he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the Lord, that was before the porch of the Lord. And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon; *for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they*

saw that the Lord his God was with him." This is what we have termed the attraction of power. As before pointed out, Judah had the temple which was the dwelling-place of God, the divine priesthood and the sacrifices. They were, in a word, on the true ground, and had the truth; but it was not this which drew so many to them from Israel, but the fact that the Lord's presence and divine power were displayed in connection with the truth. So now it is not enough to say that we have the truth; for we shall find that the truth as truth will never win souls. It has been said, for example, that you cannot meet Satan with mere truth; that unless the truth is held in communion with a living Christ you will be powerless against Satan's devices. In like manner, unless, in combination with the truth, the Lord's presence is seen working with it, and on behalf of those who hold it, there will be no power to deal with souls, or to attract them to the truth presented; for indeed Christ is the truth, and if therefore He is left out the truth becomes only a formal creed, which, while it may contain nothing but the truth, has neither life nor power.

It is therefore a mistake to expect others to be drawn to us because we have the truth. It must be seen that the Lord is with us; for He is the magnet of His people's hearts. How then may we ensure the Lord's displayed presence? Azariah proclaims the condition: "Hear me," he says, "Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: *The Lord is with you, while ye be with Him.*" (*v.* 2.) So it ever is. If we are with God—with God in His judgment of ourselves, of everything round about us, in true separation from evil, and in subjection to His word—if we are thus walking with Him, He will never

fail to show that He is with us. And just in proportion as His presence is thus manifestly with us, will there be the outgoing of power to attract the hearts of other believers. Our dependence then in our service, position, and conflict, should not be on the possession of the truth, but on having the Lord with us and working for His own glory in bowing the hearts of others to acknowledge His truth. E. D.

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

BUT further, the circumstances of the saints at Philippi, and the exhortations he had given them, made it very plain that they were in a scene which was not in order according to God's thoughts. Difficult the path might, and surely would be. Trials too and disappointments might abound, yet they could find in the Lord an unfailing ground of joy. "Finally, my brethren," he writes, "rejoice in the Lord." (iii. 1.) He had spoken of the Lord in humiliation as the example for us. He had touched on His exaltation. He would now develope how this last can be a help to us, as exemplified in himself. Judaizing teaching was baneful. It was really subversive of true Christian teaching, as he showed the Galatians. Hence he would take every pains to put souls on their guard against it. Dogs, evil-workers, concision, by such terms does he here describe those people, claiming that which now alone could be worthily called circumcision for those who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. (*v.* 3.) For

in Christ we are circumcised, as he wrote to the Colossians, in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. (Col. ii. 11.)

At this point he turns to speak of himself (*vv.* 4–16), as an example of the energy of Christian walk displayed in a man born in sin, and thus like one of us; for in truth no Gentile could so fully exemplify it. None but one born a Jew, as Paul was, could so illustrate it. He had much to boast in after the flesh, but surrendered it all for Christ in glory, whom he desired to know and to win. What he had once gloried in after the flesh he tells us. (*vv.* 4–6.) In what light he had been brought to view it all he goes on to declare. He had counted it loss for Christ, and he still counted it but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, for whom he had suffered the loss of all things, and counted them as dung that he might win Christ, and be found in Him, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God * by faith, to know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means he might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead. (*vv.* 7–11.) It was Christ in glory he wished to reach. Till that was accomplished he would not be satisfied. Paul would know Him, and would win Him. Whilst here then in the body he never could attain to all that he desired, nor apprehend that for which he had been apprehended. Hence in the energy of Christian walk he pressed for-

* He contrasts the righteousness which is of the law (ἐκ νόμου) with that which is of God (ἐκ θεοῦ). It is the source of the righteousness to which he calls attention.

ward to the goal, through whatever might be in his way, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus.

Now what Paul desired, that the perfect and full-grown Christian should desire likewise. And to any saint otherwise minded God was willing to reveal even that also. "Nevertheless," he adds, "whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same;" for this it seems he really wrote. (*v.* 16.) So he would not despise, not withdraw from, any true saint, because such an one had not attained to all that he had. Still he would not be satisfied with such resting where they were, nor, on the other hand, would he surrender one iota of that to which he had himself attained. Hence he presents himself to all as one to imitate (*v.* 17); for there were many walking in outward fellowship with the saints, who were really enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end was destruction, whose God was their belly, who gloried in their shame, who minded earthly things.

How would he minister to souls to guard them from being thus carried away? He reminds them that the Christian's citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change the body of our humiliation that it may be fashioned like to His body of glory. These people were minding earthly things, whereas our citizenship is in heaven. They were enemies of the cross of Christ. But we are to look for the return in power of the crucified One. They made their belly their God. (Rom xvi. 18.) We await that change in our bodies by which, what governed those people, will from the saints be eliminated for ever. (1 Cor. vi. 13.) Our

citizenship, our expectation, and the future condition of our bodies, these are the truths by which he would act on every true Christian. "Therefore," he adds, "my brethren dearly-beloved and longed for my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved." (iv. 1.) What care for them all does he evince? Nothing escapes him. The want of harmony between Euodia and Syntyche concerned him. He exhorts them himself to be of the same mind in the Lord. How could those women resist such an appeal? He would also stir up his true yokefellow to help them, reminding him that they were some of those who had laboured along with him in the gospel, with Clement and the rest of Paul's fellow-labourers, whose names were in the book of life. Then addressing all the Philippian saints he again exhorts them to rejoice in the Lord, adding the word *alway*, and reiterating his exhortation—"Again I say, Rejoice." Much there might have been which had troubled them —as Paul's continued imprisonment, their own persecutions, the want of harmony between some in their midst, and the presence among them of those whose walk was not such as became the gospel of Christ. But, above all this, and unaffected by it, was this unchanging ground of joy—the Lord. "Rejoice in Him alway," are Paul's words from his prison. How well did he practise what he preached!

Things were not in order upon earth, and they could not put them straight. "Let your meekness," or gentleness, therefore, he writes, "be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." He is coming, and will vindicate the cause of His people. But they must wait for that. Meanwhile let them not be burdened with care, but commit it all to God, in which case "the peace of God, which

passeth all understanding," would guard their hearts and thoughts by Christ Jesus. Then, suggesting what should occupy their thoughts, whatever is true, noble, just, pure, amiable, and of good report, he exhorts them to do what they had learned, and received, and heard, and seen in Paul, and the God of peace would be with them.

He had nothing more to add respecting the theme which had occupied him; viz., the energy and display of Christian life, but to tell them how he had learned to trust God for everything, content in the circumstances in which he was placed, yet rejoicing at the token of their Christian love, a sacrifice well pleasing to God, who would supply all their need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus, a measure of supply for us inexhaustible. In the consciousness of this, praise becomes us; and Paul would stir it up as he adds, "To our God and Father be glory to the ages of ages. Amen." Salutations follow, and from those with Paul in Rome, addressed to all the saints in Christ Jesus, a special class of saints; viz., real Christians, but all real Christians. After this he ends with the accustomed mark of the authenticity of his letters: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."

Throughout this epistle the Lord Jesus Christ is the theme. In the first chapter for Paul to live was Christ, and to depart to be with Him was far better. In the second Christ is presented as the example. In the third He is the object. In the fourth He is the One in whom under all circumstances the saint should rejoice. And His return is presented to the minds of the saints in each chapter. In the first Paul prays for them to be kept faithful till the day of Christ. In the second he reminds them

how all intelligent creatures must bow at the mention of the name of Jesus, and how the saints will be Paul's joy and crown in the day of Christ. In the third he speaks of the change which will take place in the bodies of the saints when the Lord comes for His own. In the fourth he bids them wait for His return, who will vindicate His people. In what varied and helpful lights does the Lord's return present itself!

C. E. S.

INFINITUDE.

"By Him all things consist."—Col. i. 17.

Go count the stars, and tell their sum,
The sands that gird the sea,
The fountains whence the oceans come,
And grasp infinity.

Infinite hosts and boundless sea,
Which none can count or span,
Save One who compassed Calvary
In ransom there for man.

"All things" by Him were made of old
By His eternal Word;
The seas, the sands, the stars were told
And counted by the Lord.

But sin, alas! has stung the whole
With travail, groan, and pain,
Till He destroys all death's control,
And "maketh whole" again.

Oh, Lamb of God, Thy "scarlet line"
Runs all creation through!
The glory, Lord, the glory 's Thine,
Who makest all things new.

C. F. C.

THE HOUSE IN FAILURE, AND THE RESOURCE OF FAITH.

It is not without purpose, certainly "for our admonition," that God has brought together, in 2 Sam. xxiii., David's lamentation over his house in failure; reference to the everlasting covenant made by God with himself, which secured blessing to his house, notwithstanding that failure; and the glowing record of the zeal and faithfulness of his mighty men. Such purpose is discernible to those who feel with the Lord Jesus in these days concerning the disorganization of God's house (Heb. iii.), in so far as sin could effect this directly, through self-will and neglect, and indirectly in the governmental dealings of a holy God. (1 Cor. xi. 18, 19; iii. 1–5; compare also Rev. ii. 5.) To such it is needless to do more than suggest how far David, though so precious a type of the Lord Himself, is also an example for the individual Christian.

Every reader will notice the striking phraseology of the first verse, by which evidently God would connect David with his blessed Antitype. David himself is involuntarily turned to Christ, as Him alone who could justly fulfil the obligations of one constituted a ruler over men. Being thus led on to a contemplation of the millennial reign, and its presentation in most exquisite picture, it is natural he should perceive only contrast in that upon which the immediate establishment of the kingdom's glory hung—his house. Nevertheless he has a resource,

an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, from the gracious hand of God Himself; and this is *all* his salvation, and *all* his desire. This meantime while he looked forward to the moment when the wicked shall be "thrust away" by One adequately armed for the occasion. The species of consolation afforded him may be gathered from Psalm lxxxix., where he sings "of the mercies of the Lord," and where the Lord also speaks to us of "the sure mercies of David." And how deeply engraved on David's soul was a sense of the Lord's goodness in giving him this covenant! It was His gracious response to David's exemplary zeal in seeking "a place for the Lord, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob." (Compare 2 Sam. vii. and Psalm cxxxii.)

It is in keeping with God's ways that He should, at this point of David's history, present to us a detailed review of his mighty men and their achievements. Considering his house, there is only ground for lamentation; nevertheless, grace secures to him a prospect worthy in every way of God; and his faith being occupied thus with what *Christ would be*—"for a glorious throne to His Father's house," God displays to us what David has been as reflected in those his faith had gathered round him.

Saul had been anointed to deliver Israel; but showed at the outset how short-sighted is man's choice. Though furnished with adequate power (1 Sam. x. 7), and enjoined to "do as occasion served" on reaching "the hill of God," he did not expel the Philistine garrison which occupied it, perhaps did not perceive the incongruity of their being there. It was fruitless that he there also met the company of prophets, in accordance with Samuel's word, except indeed in so far as it brought glory to

himself; for he could become a vessel for God to speak *through him*, though heeding not the word of God *to him*. He was helpless in the presence of Goliath afterwards; then became a prey to envy, and persecutor of the man after God's own heart; and finally dies, forsaken of God, at the hand of those he might have overcome.

Not so David. He begins with victory worthy of Him for whom he wrought, reminding one of former days at Jericho; and finally delivers the land and the people of the Lord from all enemies. Meantime were gathered around him those who saw in him God's chosen and anointed king, and who inspired, so to speak, by his own faith and zeal, wrought with him and stood by him in adversity, where his worth, and their attachment to him, were mutually proved. They are seen "holding strongly with him," to make him king over all Israel on the death of Saul; and in the portion before us, on the very threshold of Solomon's reign of glory, we again find them placed alongside their beloved leader by God Himself. Typically, we may say, he was the captain of their salvation, perfected through sufferings, the leader and completer of faith, anointed with oil of gladness above his fellows, who bare the privilege here apparently of being numbered with him, "thirty-seven in all." (last verse.)

It is easy to see Christ in all this; and coming to the New Testament, we find a divine development of what has occupied us presented in the fullest and most sustaining way. And who may without presumption undertake to speak of *this* Man after God's "own heart" indeed? It is well we have Scripture at every step. The Father loves to speak of Him to us; and

though it be presumption to allow *our* little thoughts concerning Him to appear, it is our highest privilege and joy to gather up His concerning the object of His delight. We hear Him say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." "Because He has set His love upon me, therefore will I deliver Him; I will set Him on high, because He hath known my name." Oh, to sit lowly before Him, and learn of Him from the only One who knows Him fully! What self-emptiness there must be for communion with God! Self-occupation in any form hinders it; *e.g.* Mark ix. 31–34. Man must be utterly displaced. This we see well in the case of the leper. (Lev. xiv.) Poor thing! "unclean" and "afar off," needing a sacrifice though amenable to gracious dealing, made clean before God's eye by acceptable blood-sprinkling; qualified for companionship of the redeemed by one washing with water; and for one's own place in the company by a second washing—all most important and, as we well know, necessary. Nor is this all. Death must be brought home to his heart—learned in connection with what he had done, every faculty of the first man being thus brought under the power of death, and a new power given, *oil upon* the blood. Then *what he is* is also apprehended as dealt with in the sin-offering and burnt-offering. But this withal yields a sweet savour to God, and the soul rendered thus sensible of richest acceptance enters upon communion in the truest sense. (See also Lev. vii. 1–18.) The Lord empty us of self in every form, and fill our souls with *His thoughts of* JESUS; for IN HIM we *are all* that God can look for, and IN HIM we *have all* that heart can desire.

Entered upon a harassing scene, we see Him set for

God, and for God alone. He had one object—the glory of His Father; one hope too—the right hand, with its "pleasures for evermore," though the path to it lay through death. (Ps. xvi.; Heb. xii. 2.) For Jehovah's sake bearing reproach, "a stranger to His brethren, and an alien to His mother's children," the zeal of His house eating Him up. Thus set for God, the world ranged itself in opposition to Him, withal so gracious—the heathen raging, the people meditating, the kings set, and the rulers taking counsel against Him. What a picture! Well might He exclaim, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee!"

And what of His house, of whom it was written, "I will dwell in them and walk in them"? He "looked for comforters, but *found none.*" In view of His sufferings, when He might have reckoned upon their sympathy, they were heartlessly quarrelling over their prospects in the kingdom. Here indeed was a sorrow, and one the Lord felt; for He gives utterance to His thoughts in the words of warning: "All ye shall be offended because of me this night;" and so it was: "They all forsook Him and fled." They were looking for the kingdom, but there was little in them to maintain its glory. Nevertheless it was the Father's good pleasure to give it them (Luke xii.); the Son appointed it unto them (Luke xxii.), and the Holy Ghost bears witness to the gift as theirs and ours (Heb. xii.); yea, more. Divine grace, in the complacency of infinite inalienable love, can strew blessings for "His own" along the whole pathway from even the fireside in Herod's judgment-hall to the seat beside Himself in heavenly glory; can rejoice that, having given them the Father's words, "they have received them" without

questioning *the degree*, and can glory that "they have kept thy word" without questioning *the manner*.

As the heart passes, not without precious exercise, from one extreme to the other—from what man, alas! is, to what through mercy we know God to be—one may ask the secret and foundation of it all. Blessed be God, we have both in these few words: "The blood of the everlasting covenant."

Condescending, though terrible, was the covenant of God with Israel at Sinai. Mercy shines in that delivered to them still later through the Mediator. Gracious was God in vouchsafing an everlasting covenant in favour of His house to David His servant; and still more gracious that which He will make with the house of Israel after those days, in the blessings of which we share. In His promise to Abraham's seed (Christ), God could leave room for the introduction of Gentiles into blessing on the ground of faith. But we must go to Eph. i. 3–6, &c., to learn the circumstances, height and extent of blessing involved in the everlasting covenant, as well as to John xvii. for its precious and sweetest application. In view of immediate failure that heavenly prayer was uttered on earth by divine lips in behalf of unworthy objects. When first love had waned, and allowed sin had effaced Pentecostal beauty (compare Jer. ii. 2, 3), John xvii. was written, as a servant of the Lord has well remarked, that it might be the stay and comfort, as indeed it has been, of His beloved ones, till the moment when confusion will for us have ever ceased. Sweet it will be to surround Him then, holding "strongly with Him," as those who have in any little measure shared His rejection!

J. K.

HOW CAN I HAVE PEACE?

GOD does not mean us to take up things lightly without exercise of soul. When the light of God shines into the conscience sin is felt and seen too, where it never was seen before. God shines in, and I find darkness. God cannot have to do with darkness. I find that in me which God cannot accept. How can God accept me?

I am always glad to see a conscience exercised thus. It is all useful to convict of sin. It is good for the light to probe to the bottom of the heart. It is awful to think what the human heart is; I do not mean in the gross forms of evil. There is something in the selfishness, the cold calculating reasoning of man's heart, worse than all the sins one could enumerate; yes, even of the decent man who keeps his character! Is there one single motive which governs your heart, decent and sober as you are, which governed Christ? Is there one feeling in your breast which was in Christ? Not one. What governs men? Selfishness. Not so Christ. There was no selfishness in Christ. In Him all was love. Love it was that brought Him down. Love gave Him energy when hungry and weary at the well. Love carried Him on, one constant unfailing stream of love. Never was He betrayed into anything contrary to it. Deserted, abandoned, betrayed, still there was one unwearying action of love. Selfishness can feel love. It is even lovely to man's mind, though he is the very

opposite of it; yet some are amiable and beautiful characters. But how do they use their amiability? To attract to self! Self governs man. Selfishness need not be put into him; it is there. All is sin from beginning to end—all self. Whatever be the form it takes, it is vanity. Is it not true of every one that will read this that some personal gratification, perhaps some little bit, has more power to occupy the thoughts than the agony of Christ? Not that He would have us always occupied with that; He would have us occupied with His person and glory.

What I want to prove then is, that we cannot think badly enough of what our hearts are. It is well that we should know it; for we cannot have the truth without in some measure judging the root and principle of evil within. But then have we any power to remedy the evil? No; none. But when brought to God, happily we get miserable about it. When there are desires after truth, I hope, because I see some goodness in God; but hope is dashed by seeing some evil in myself. That is not simplicity. It is judging God by some sort of knowledge of what I am. It may be true and righteous, but it is law. The principle of law is, that God is towards man according to what man is towards God. It is the principle which conscience always will act on; for according to conscience it is right. The evil is not in this, but in the fact that I am not brought to total despair. The light has not yet broken down the will, so as to make me cry out, "I am vile, and abhor myself in dust and ashes."

Beloved friends, if I take the ground of expecting anything from God, in virtue of what I am towards Him, all is over. There is nothing but condemnation.

God is holy, and I am not; God is righteous, and I am a sinner. The end of all these exercises of soul is to make you cry out, "I am vile," and that is all. God is holy, and I am not. He is holy, and must be holy, and ought to be holy. Would you have Him lower Himself down to what you are? No, never. I may tremble before Him when I think of it, but I would not have it otherwise. No person quickened into the divine nature could deliberately wish God to come down from His holiness to spare one sin, because he has learnt by that same nature to hate sin. My heart has tasted a little of love in God Himself; for He cannot reveal Himself without revealing love. The law shows man what he ought to be, but does not show what God is. It says, Love God, and it shows me that I ought to love; but does not tell me who or what the God is I am to love. Job said, "If I could but find Him." However distracted and broken to pieces under the hand of God, he felt that if he could only find Him, he would love Him. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Flesh is always under the law. Realising by faith the precious truth that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin, then all is easy, all is peace. Flesh comes in and troubles, and the soul is down; and it is up and down; and the evil is, that the soul gets habituated to such alternations, and not to walking in communion with God.

To think that God is going to condemn me is not fellowship with His thoughts. What is fellowship? Common thoughts together; common feelings, affections, objects, one heart, one mind. Thus we have fellowship with God. How wonderful! Fellowship with the Father and the Son. How so? Why, what have I received if I have not received God's thoughts?

no spot at all is seen in us. Do you walk thus in the light? It is a real thing. The walk is what a man really is. Can you stand in the light as God is in it, without a veil between, walking not according to the light, but in the light? Have you ever walked in such sort, knowing, without an effort in your conscience, that you are in the presence of God? If not, how have you been walking—going on for a few brief years, whither you know not, in the awful folly of the human heart, in a constant state of moral madness? Have you ever had it all told out in your conscience, alone with God, all that you ever did? A long tale! "That is what you have done, that is what you have thought, and I saw it all." Would you like thus to be told out, alone with God, the things that perhaps were not done before men, just proving that you thought more of man than of God? Is it all going to sink into oblivion? Have you thus been manifested to God as the apostle speaks?

Here is a message—mark who brings it—a message by Christ. To bring me to Christ, to God, to judge? No; but to bring me to One who has come to put away all that He has made manifest. I breathe again; what comfort! I can desire now that everything should be known, everything I have even thought of, because it is to Him who came to put it all away; not to hide, nor excuse, but to put it all away. The Son of God has died for it all. It is God putting my sin away, instead of putting me away. I am in the light, but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin. I get the witness of God Himself—God who is light. If He does not show a spot in me, who will? Do I say, there is no spot in my nature? No; but it does not depend on what I am;

it depends on God, in whose light I am. The God who manifests me tells me that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin. God has loved me perfectly. How do I know that? Because of what I am? No, I know it from what God is, and from what He has done; and my soul rests in constant, perfect, undisturbed peace; for God has revealed Himself to be what He is, and has revealed what He has done, in that Christ died; and what He has done never can change; He never changes. It is in the power of an accomplished salvation that the soul rests, and not on anything that is yet to be done; so that there can be no change. The blood of Christ alone blots out my sin. If Christ did not do it perfectly, when will it be done? But He has done it. "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." When faith by divine teaching has laid hold on this, faith does not change either. "The worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins. J. N. D.

ACHOR (*i.e.* TROUBLE).

Discipline.—HOSEA ii. 14, 15; HEB. xii. 1–13; PS. xxiii.

"The reproofs of instruction are the *way* of life."—PROV. vi. 23.
"Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way."
PROV. xv. 10.
"Blessed is the man in whose heart are the *ways*."—PS. lxxxiv.
"The Father Himself loveth you."—JOHN xvi. 27.

DOWN in Achor's trial-scenes
Self is judged, and guilty found—
Faithful there the Father makes
Achor His correction-ground.

"Vale of trouble," "door of hope,"
Through the valley drawn by Thee,
Learning from Thy pleadings there
Love's alluring ministry.

Chastened, Father, and restored,
Oh, what joy on Thee to wait!
Ent'ring into Thy blest ways,
Ent'ring by the Shepherd's gate.

Shepherd "ways" of grace and truth,
Secrets of Thy staff and rod,"
"Waters still, and pastures green,"
Abba, Father—Abba, God.

Father thus each son received,
Profits by Thy jealous care;
Each partakes Thy holiness,
Each Thy faithful scourgings share.

Achor-valley, "open door,"
Scene of One from God who died;
Dying, living, "Door of hope,"
Opened by His riven side.

Without sorrow, none below;
Without sin but One alone;
"Man of sorrows"—His the cross,
Winning thence the Father's throne.

Achor's loved ones "sing," "rejoice,"
Sing of Jesus' precious blood;
Praise the Father's "Door of hope,"
Magnify the Lamb of God.

C. F. C.

EXPOSITORY JOTTINGS.

I. CHRISTIAN SACRIFICES.

PHIL. iv. 18; HEB. xiii. 15, 16; 1 PETER ii. 5.

ALL believers now are priests. During the Jewish dispensation the priesthood was confined to one family, and no one outside of that divinely-described circle dared to penetrate into it. But Aaron and his sons were a figure of the whole Church as a priestly family, of the Church as a priestly family in association with Christ; for blessed as is the place into which believers are now brought, and precious as are the privileges with which they are invested, all these things are only enjoyed in connection with Christ. All alike, therefore, are priests, and all alike have access into the holiest of all—into the immediate presence of God. (See Heb. x. 19–22; 1 Peter ii. 5–9.) This dignity and this access pertain to them solely on the ground of the priesthood of Christ and the everlasting virtue of His one sacrifice for sins.

As priests we have an altar (Heb. xiii. 10), and on that altar we have continually to offer our sacrifices to God. What then, let us inquire, are the sacrifices of Christian priests? They are twofold in character. First, there is "the sacrifice of praise;" *i.e.* as the Spirit of God Himself explains, "the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name." (Heb. xiii. 15.) With this will correspond the "spiritual sacrifices" of St. Peter. From this we gather that all true worship, thanksgiving, and

praise are sacrifices; and this again will help us to determine what true worship, thanksgiving, or praise is. We read of our blessed Lord that, through the eternal Spirit, He offered Himself without spot to God. (Heb. ix. 14.) All true worship, therefore, must be characterized by three things. It must be presented in the power of the Holy Ghost (compare John iv. 24; Phil. iii. 3), Christ is the medium through which it must be presented (for He indeed is the Christian's altar), and it must be offered to God. The psalmist, when meditating upon the beauty of the tabernacles of the Lord of hosts, cries, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee." (Ps. lxxxiv. 4.) This blessedness belongs now to every saint of God; nay, we are ourselves built up a spiritual house, and as a holy priesthood it is our privilege to offer perpetual praise. God was said to inhabit—*i.e.* to be surrounded with, to dwell in the midst of—the praises of Israel. Much more should it be so now when in His infinite grace, and through the efficacy of the work of Christ, He has brought us to Himself, and delights Himself in the adoration of our hearts.

Secondly, there are sacrifices of another sort which we are called upon, or rather which it is our privilege, to offer. These are connected with ministration to the needs both of the saints and the servants of God. We read thus in the Hebrews, "To do good, and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Again, in the Philippians, the apostle speaks of the gift which had been sent to him through Epaphroditus as "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." It constituted, to borrow language from the Old Testament, a sweet

savour offering. How grateful to God then is ministry, sacrifices of this kind! But it must be remembered that mere giving—giving, for example, reluctantly, or only because of importunity—would not make the gift a sacrifice. As in the sacrifice of praise, the gift must be presented through Christ, to God, in the power of the Spirit. It is only of such gifts that it could be said that they are "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God."

The application of these principles can easily be made by those who desire to test the character of their worship and of their benefactions; and while the application cannot fail to humble the most of us, by showing how much of our service is really worthless before God, it will surely be productive of blessing if it lead us in every exercise of our priesthood to judge ourselves as in the light of the presence of God.

In Romans xii. we read of another sacrifice, which, though not connected in this scripture with our priesthood, may yet be briefly explained. The apostle says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable" (or intelligent) "service." (*v.* 1.) This exhortation connects itself, as its ground of appeal, with the close of chap. viii., and, as to its subject-matter, with chap. vi.; that is, the mercies of God are all the mercies which have been expressed, in the grace of God, in our redemption—as traced out in Rom. i.–viii.—and the appeal as to our bodies flows from the truth stated in Rom. vi. Delivered from the power of sin through death with Christ, sin is no longer to reign in our mortal body, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof. (Rom.

vi. 12.) No; our bodies are to be yielded up henceforward to God, that as they had been before the instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, so now our members are to be instruments of righteousness unto God.

Coming then to chap. xii., we learn the character of the presentation of our bodies to God. They are to be presented "a living sacrifice;" not as a slain animal, a dead sacrifice, laid on the altar, but because our bodies are not dead, and sin is in us, they are always to be kept under the power of death ("always bearing about in the body the 'putting to death' of Jesus"), and thus presented to God as a living sacrifice. They are presented to Him for His service, that, instead of their being governed as they had always been, by our own wills for our own ends, He in His wondrous grace might henceforward use them as organs for the expression of Christ. Such a yielding up of our bodies to God, let it be again stated, involves the constant application of the power of death, and consequently it becomes a living sacrifice. Christ being in us, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. And such a sacrifice, as it is, on the one hand, holy and acceptable to God, so it is, on the other, our intelligent service—a service suitable to the claims which God has upon us on account of redemption, and one, it may be added, which should be joyfully as well as intelligently rendered.

One more remark may be made. It will be observed that in this case also the sacrifice is presented to God (to whom else could it be offered?) on the ground of redemption; that is, through Christ; and it is also true that it can only be accomplished in the power of the Holy Ghost.

It follows then that we are to live priestly lives; that whether we are occupied in praise and adoration, or engaged in ministering to the needs of others, or in the busy activities of our callings (see 1 Peter ii. 9.), we are to behave ourselves as priests at the altar in the presence of God.

II. CHRISTIAN SONG.

EPHES. v. 18, 19; COL. iv. 16.

There are two divinely appointed channels for the emotions which are the fruit of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer: "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms." (James v. 13.) Our sorrows should thus find expression before God in prayer, and our joys in song. Concerning ourselves in these remarks only with the latter, it may be profitable to notice the teaching on this subject of the two scriptures which stand at the head of this article.

In Ephesians our praise and thanksgiving are to be the result of being filled with the Spirit, and this in contrast with being drunk with wine. Wine, in this connection, while not excluding its literal meaning, is used rather in its typical significance. The Christian is not to be intoxicated with earthly joy, but he is to be filled with the Holy Ghost. It is very noticeable on the day of Pentecost that the multitude mistook the action of the Spirit in the apostles for the effects of wine—showing that the action of wine on the natural man simulates or counterfeits the action of the Spirit of God in the believer. In fact, when any of the early Christians were filled with the Spirit they were lifted up out of themselves, and were used as vessels for the

expression of the Spirit's power whether in testimony or in praise. In such a state souls cease to be occupied with themselves; for it is the Spirit's delight to lead out our hearts in the contemplation of Christ, according to that word, "He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." (John xvi. 14.) Thus lost in the view of Christ, His perfections, excellencies, His worthiness, and His perpetual and tender ministries of love, from His place at the right hand of God, as well as in the anticipation of the joy of seeing Him face to face, and of being for ever with Him, God would have us speak to ourselves (or, perhaps, to one another) in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our heart to the Lord. When in such a state it would be impossible for the soul to find a voice for its feelings except in exalted strains of praise and adoration.

In Colossians, on the other hand, the same result is produced by the word of Christ dwelling richly in us. The effect, in the first place, is to be seen in our teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, and then in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs singing with grace in our hearts to God ("to God" is the true reading). We have seen that praise is produced in Ephesians by the Spirit occupying the soul with Christ. So also here; for the word of Christ is but the unfolding and display of what He Himself is, and hence, when it dwells richly in us, we have Christ —Christ in all His glories—constantly present to our souls. It is of necessity therefore that we worship with the voice of praise and thanksgiving.

Surely it need scarcely be pointed out that none but *believers* could share in such songs of praise—and, in

the measure of these scriptures, only those believers whose hearts are under the direct action of the Holy Spirit and the word of Christ.

Another observation is important. In both passages we have psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. We have no means of interpreting the exact force of these different terms; but it may be safely said that they include human compositions. In the energy of the Spirit of God, especially in these early days, the affections of the soul to Christ could not but delightedly pour themselves out in strains of praise and melody at His feet. And He on His part could not but gratefully feed upon the fruit which His own Spirit had produced and ripened in the souls of His saints. It was in this way that many, like Mary, would bring their alabaster box of ointment to anoint the feet of their Lord, and the house would again, as before, be filled with the odour of the ointment. (John xii.)

It is very evident that both scriptures point to such songs in private as well as in the assembly. And the question may perhaps be raised whether Christian song occupies its due place, either with individuals, or in the families of the saints. For it has many uses. First and foremost, it is a relief to the heart; *i.e.* to the heart that is overflowing with the sense of the love of Christ. Even more, it is a relief to the heart in time of trouble; for though our circumstances may be trying, we can always find matter of praise to God. The line of a popular hymn, though badly expressed, contains a truth. It says—

"Sing a song to Jesus when the heart is faint."

Let the troubled Christian do this, and he will find that his burden is lightened and his heart eased even

while in the very act of making melody to the Lord. Again, it is a means of edification; *i.e.* supposing the hymns sung are according to truth; and, lastly, it may become a testimony. This would seem to have been the case with Paul and Silas. Cast into prison, with their backs still sore from the stripes of their persecutors, like the apostles Peter and John, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ, and at midnight they prayed and sang praises to God; *and the prisoners heard them.* It was a new thing for such a sound to be heard in that prison-house. Satan had roused the city against these servants of the Lord, and thought he had gained a great victory by securing their imprisonment. But God would be glorified over the adversary, and He thus filled the mouths of Paul and Silas with praise in the very seat of the enemy's power, and so mighty was the testimony rendered in connection with the events of that night that the jailor (who was used of Satan to afflict the apostles) and his family were turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Songs had been given to them in the night, and while they ascended as sweet incense before the throne of God, they also were accompanied by a testimony which bore fruit for eternity in the salvation, through the sovereign grace of God, of the jailor and his house.

May we all be so continually under the power of the Spirit, and all have the word of Christ so richly dwelling in us that our lives may be characterised by perpetual praise to God! E. D.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

To Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, is commonly, and we believe rightly, attributed the epistle addressed to the Hebrews, to which, contrary to his usual practice, he did not affix his name. Awaiting Timothy's return, with whom he hoped shortly to see them, he wrote beforehand to build them up in the faith.

Part of God's ancient people, with hopes proper to that people, a land assigned them by God for their inheritance, with a ritual of divine appointment, and a revelation addressed directly through Moses to Israel, a Jew on becoming a Christian had to surrender much which a Gentile had never possessed. Not that he was giving up mistaken teaching and misplaced hopes; for he turned his back on the temple-worship appointed by God, on Judaism, and on the land in which he was dwelling, as that which was no longer to be his portion, his home. For a Jew, then, to become a Christian involved the surrender of cherished hopes, and that position once assigned them by God of complete separation, socially and ecclesiastically, from admixture with Gentiles. Yet if he gave up much that he had valued, and as a Jew rightly valued, he gained far more than he had lost, though at the expense of certain trouble, probably persecution, and, it might be, a martyr's death. Hence if those once Gentiles needed encouragement (1 Thess. ii. 14, 15; 2 Thess. i. 5), how much more those who had been Jews. To encourage such the apostle wrote (iv. vi. x. xii.), and this he did in the most effectual way by ministering Christ; first, truth about His person as God

and man (i. ii.); then truth about Him as the apostle of our profession, and as to His present service as High Priest (iii.–viii.); and then truth about His atoning sacrifice (ix. x.), followed by exhortations, and grounds for encouragement to persevere on to the end. The baneful errors of Judaizing, Paul had exposed when writing to the Galatians. The surpassing excellence of Christ above Moses and Aaron, and what as Jews they had valued, he unfolds in this letter to the Hebrews.

For centuries God had been silent. Between the days of Malachi and those of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, we have no record of any communication in words between Jehovah and the earthly people. But now that silence had been broken—and God, who had spoken in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, had in the end of the days (*i.e.* of the age before Messiah should appear in power) spoken unto His people in the Son. Prophet after prophet had come: at last He sent His well-beloved Son. Thus, writing to those who once formed part of God's earthly people, the apostle connects all previous revelation to Israel with that which had been graciously vouchsafed in the day in which he and they lived. God "hath spoken to us," he writes, "in the Son." Then, like a master in the art of painting, who with a few bold strokes with his pencil presents the object he desires to the eye of the observer, the sacred writer, inspired of God, traces out for his readers, briefly but most clearly, the past, the present, and the future of Him here called the Son.

As to the future, God has appointed Him to be Heir of all things; as regards the past, by Him God made the worlds; and as to the present, He has sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High, having first by

Himself purged sins.* The Son, then, is both God and man. As man, He died; as God, He sits now on high, perfectly and everlastingly a man, yet God too, blessed for evermore—two natures in one person.

Turning to the Old Testament Scriptures, the Hebrews are instructed in the teaching which they afford concerning the One here introduced as the Son; first, as to His Sonship; next, as to His divinity; and then as to His humanity. As regards His Sonship, He is here viewed as Son born in time. Hence quotations are made from Ps. ii. 7, and from 2 Sam. vii. 14, in proof that God owned Him as His Son; and from Ps. xcvii. 7, and civ. 4, to show that though a man, He is superior to, and quite distinct from, angels. But more, He is God as well as man; and from the lips of Jehovah this truth has been proclaimed in a psalm (xlv. 6, 7), in which, describing Him returning to earth in millennial power, Jehovah addresses Him as God, and yet speaks of His God. But more, though Son as born in time, there never was a time when He did not exist; for He is Jehovah and the Creator, who laid the foundations of the earth, the heavens too being the work of His hands. They shall perish, but He remains. He is the same, and His years shall not fail (Ps. cii. 25–27); and He sits where no angel can sit, at the right hand of Jehovah, until He makes His enemies His footstool. (Ps. cx. 1.) How clear the Hebrews must have seen was the old testament teaching relative to His divinity who had by Himself purged sins. Hence it behoved all who heard not to neglect so great salvation, which began

* The best authorities leave out "*our*" before sins. The point here is what the Son has done, and not who those are who reap the benefit of it.

to be spoken by the Lord, but was confirmed unto them by those that heard, God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will.

Following upon this exhortation, Old Testament witness to the humanity of the Lord is brought out. Of Him Psalm viii. spoke as the Son of man, under whom all things are to be put. As Son of man He will be above angels. By His death He became lower than them. Of His humanity He Himself is the witness. God attested His divinity, as we have seen. He proclaims His humanity, as the quotations from Psalms xxii. 22, xviii. 2; Isa. viii. 18, make plain. How fitting was this! Who but God should attest His divinity? On the other hand, how suitable that He should identify Himself as man with some of the race of Adam. Of some we say, because He only here identifies Himself with those who are saints; "for He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren;" *i.e.* those who are God's children. They were partakers of flesh and blood, so He took part of the same; *i.e.* became really a man, that through death He might annul him that had the power of death, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. What results flow from His death! He tasted death for every thing. (9.) Thus creation is concerned in it. By it He has annulled him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. The arch-enemy of God and man is affected by it. By that same death He has wrought deliverance for the saints; and as a consequence of it He has made propitiation for the sins

of the people. (14–18.) But this introduces His priesthood, which is Aaronic now in character, and Melchisedechian in order. And so as Aaronic in character He has taken up the question of sins before God, and intercedes for the people before the throne.

In a double character then the Lord has appeared. God has spoken to us in the *Son*. He is the Apostle of our confession, He is also High Priest, and has made propitiation for the sins of the people. "Consider then," we read, "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as also Moses was in all His house." (iii. 1, 2.) Now these words are addressed to "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." Abraham and Israel had an earthly calling. Christians have a heavenly calling. Now this first spoken of by the Lord (Matt. v. 11, 12; Luke vi. 22, 23, xii. 33) is developed necessarily in this epistle, which addresses those who once had been Jews, but who had given up all for Christ's sake. He then is set before them as surpassing Moses. Moses was faithful *in* all God's house as a servant; but Christ as Son *over* His, *i.e.* God's house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. (iii. 5, 6.) Such language intimates that these Christians were, as it were, like their fathers of old, on the march through the wilderness. So suited exhortation follows. (iii. 7–iv. 11.)

God had spoken in the end of the days in the Son. The coming kingdom therefore might not be far off. And living in the end of the age ere the Messiah would appear in power to establish the kingdom, the language of Psalm xcv. 7–11, addressing the remnant of the

future, was language suited for the Hebrews in the day this epistle was indited. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." (iii. 12–14.) The psalm speaks of a rest—God's rest—into which His people shall assuredly enter; not rest of conscience, but rest from all toil and work, as God did when He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He created and made. (Gen. ii. 3.) "He that hath entered into his rest hath also ceased from his works, as God did from His own." (iv. 10.)

This clears the passage from misinterpretation. God's rest clearly is rest from all work. Hence for His saints it is future, and those who have believed are on their way to it. Further, attention to the forms of exhortation in this passage will show the reader that no doubt is cast on the future of believers, though they are exhorted in the strongest way to bestir themselves. When exhorting the saints not to stop short, he says "*you*." (iii. 12, iv. 1.) When exhorting them to press forward he says "*us*" (iii. 14. iv. 14), classing himself with them. He could not read their hearts. But each, as he, should know if he was really converted. So addressing them on the ground of profession he necessarily says "*you*." But each and all were to be diligent to press forward, and he shows that by writing, "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." (iv. 11.) C. E. S.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

"ALL SAINTS."

Eph. iii. 18.

There are two ways in which we may fall into sectarianism. We may adopt a distinctively sectarian platform by associating ourselves with those believers whose bond is avowedly a common agreement on points of doctrine, or upon questions of church government; or, while we professedly take the ground of the Church of God, we may become sectarian in feeling by narrowing our thoughts, interests, and affections to the few with whom we are found in fellowship. In both cases the mind of God is entirely missed. A few illustrations from the Scriptures will both explain and justify this statement.

After the return of the remnant from Babylon, and when, after much neglect and unfaithfulness, they had prospered in building the house of God, "through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo," they came together, "the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity," and they "kept the dedication of this house of God with joy." (Ezra vi. 14–16.) As a matter of fact, these "children of Israel" were composed only of a feeble remnant of the two tribes Judah and Benjamin, besides the priests and the Levites. At such a moment they might have been tempted to forget, if not to exclude, their brethren who had not responded to the proclamation of Cyrus, and united with them in re-

turning to the land of their fathers, the land which had been given them by the Lord their God. Choosing Babylonish ease, though captives, rather than to suffer affliction with those "whose spirit God had raised" to encounter the dangers of their pilgrim-journey, and the perils attendant upon their dwelling in the land, now in the possession and under the power of their enemies, might they not be held to have forfeited their place and title among the people of God? A spirit of harshness might have thus reasoned; but this poor feeble remnant, whatever their condition, was in possession of the thoughts of God, and accordingly, at this feast of the dedication of the temple, they offered, in addition to other sacrifices, "*for a sin-offering for all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.*" The heart of God embraced all the children of Israel; for He had not chosen them because of what they were, but because He loved them, and because of His faithfulness to the oath which He had sworn to their fathers. (Deut. vii. 7, 8.) They were therefore still His people, whatever their unfaithfulness, and wherever they might be scattered upon the face of the earth. Hence it was in true communion with the heart of God that the whole of Israel was represented in the sin-offering of that day. Had it been otherwise, had these children of the captivity forgotten their brethren, and had they been tempted to think that they alone were the objects of the thoughts and counsels of God, they would have been a sect, and a sect only, notwithstanding that their present position was in some measure an evidence of their obedience and faithfulness. As has often been remarked, while the feet must walk in a narrow path, the heart must never be contracted.

We pass now to another scene, in the days of Elijah. It was one of the darkest moments in the history of Israel, but prior in time to the one just considered. Under the reign of Ahab, who had suffered his wife Jezebel to teach and to seduce the servants of God to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols (see Rev. ii. 20), Israel had become apostate. There were indeed seven thousand known to God who had not bowed the knee to Baal; but Elijah was the only remaining public witness to the truth of God. In the energy of the Spirit of God, he confronted the idolaters and the idolatrous prophets of Baal, and challenged them to vindicate their faith, and the name of their god. From morning to evening these wicked prophets sacrificed and prayed, and in proof of their devotion "they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." It was now the turn of Elijah; alone, be it again remarked, as to the public testimony; alone in the face of timid time-servers, halters between two opinions, and open wicked apostates. His first act was to repair the altar of the Lord that was broken down—the condition of the altar being the proof of the state of the people. Then—and mark the action—"Elijah took twelve stones, *according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob*, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord." (1 Kings xviii. 21-32.) Never had there been a time so dark, a time surely when a servant of God might

have been tempted to utter despair, as indeed was the case with Elijah in the very next chapter. But here, while still confronting the enemy, and upheld by the power of the Holy Ghost, he was enabled to rest in God and His faithfulness, and thus to embrace in his faith and in his heart all the twelve tribes. The man of faith can never give up what God does not give up, and accordingly, spite of rebellion, and even apostasy, he must still claim all the people of God. Filled with God's thoughts, he must move in that circle; and were he, even unwillingly, to adopt a narrower, he would be, as to feeling and experience, a sectarian. And, it may be added, there will be no room for despondency, even in the greatest confusion and departure from the truth, as long as we are maintained in communion with the heart of God concerning all His people. Their sorrowful condition will only then be an incentive to continual ministry on their behalf, whether in labour or in prayer.

Take yet another example. When Paul was "speaking for himself" before Agrippa, he said, "I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: unto which promise *our twelve tribes*, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come." (Acts xxvi. 6, 7.) Looking at the twelve tribes, as they actually and practically were at that moment, how different their case. Ten tribes were lost; and the two that had been brought back out of Babylon had crucified their Messiah, and were now seeking to compass the death of His servant Paul! Still faith claims them all—and all as instantly serving God night and day in hope of the fulfilment of the promise made to the fathers! So in the wilderness, whatever the state, morally, of the camp, there were always the twelve loaves in their ordered

beauty, covered with frankincense, on the golden table in the holy place before the Lord. (Lev. xxiv.) It is thus that faith enters into the thoughts and purposes of God, and views them as they exist before His eye.

Coming now to the scripture at the head of this paper, the same principle is exemplified. The apostle prays that the Ephesians might be able to comprehend *with all the saints* what is the breadth, and length, &c. There might be departure from the truth, all they in Asia might have turned away from him, Demas might have forsaken him because he loved the present age, the Corinthians might be on the verge of refusing his apostolic authority, but, notwithstanding all, he cannot, because in communion with the heart of God, omit a single saint of God in the desires, begotten and expressed in the power of the Holy Ghost, which he pours out on their behalf before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God Himself included all His children in His heart of love, in His desire for their growth and progress, in His perpetual ministries of tenderness and grace, and on this account the apostle does the same.

The lesson is obvious. We in like manner must comprehend all the saints in our affections and prayers; and in a day when there are so many temptations to narrowness there is the more need to enforce it. But be it observed that it is enlargement of heart for which we plead, not the widening of our path. In both things Christ Himself is our standard. If we have to love one another as He has loved us (John xv. 12), we have also to walk even as He walked. (1 John ii. 6.) May these two things be ever increasingly displayed by us—to the glory of the blessed name of our Lord and Saviour!

E. D.

THE THREEFOLD WITNESS.

"For they that bear witness are three, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He has witnessed concerning His Son."

1 JOHN v. 8, 9.

WHILE recalling, in connection with this passage, the three aspects in which we have found the work and effect of redemption presented in the types of the Old Testament, we would now insist specially on the great truth, that the object of all testimony is CHRIST. It is to Him, not to us, God bears witness, when He would establish our hearts before Himself in the full blessing of the revelation He has made to us. The ground of all divine assurance in the soul is "the witness of God which He has witnessed concerning His Son." Whatever side of the truth may be before us—that which is external, the work done *for* us, or that which is internal, operated *in* us by the Spirit of God—the divine "witness" is borne to Christ, and to Him alone. This is important, in order that the believer may be established before God in peace that cannot be shaken or disturbed. If we consider ourselves, nothing is yet perfect even in the most advanced Christian. Paul said, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already perfected; but I pursue, if also I may get possession of it." (Phil. iii. 12.) If, then, our practical state were the ground of our assurance, even the blessed apostle himself would not have had it. But he says elsewhere, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded

that He is able to keep for that day the deposit I have entrusted to Him." (2 Tim. i. 12.) Christ was ever the foundation of his confidence towards God.

"In Christ" the Christian enjoys a standing absolutely perfect before God, while he waits for the moment when his knowledge will be perfect also, when he sees Jesus as He is. Everything in Christ is perfect, and His redeeming work is once and for ever completed. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. Having died too, He died once for all to sin; but in that He liveth, He liveth to God. He has nothing more to do with sin. Everything connected with it was fully settled before God when He died on the cross, and His precious blood was shed. He rose from among the dead on the third day, and henceforth His life in resurrection represents the perfect position in which God sets all those who by His death have been redeemed and brought to Him in holiness and righteousness.

It is the character of this new position we have now to consider; and surely it is the first thing a heart truly exercised in God's presence feels the need of laying hold of. But let us not forget that it is in Christ we learn it, just as we find that Christ is the key for understanding all the types of the Old Testament. What is then the relationship with God into which we are brought as a direct consequence of the redemption Christ has wrought? God bears witness to what Christ is personally—His Son, and tells us that "He that *hath the Son* hath life." He sends His Holy Spirit—"the Spirit of His Son"—into the heart of those whom He has brought to Himself in order to make this relationship good in their souls individually. And thus He

more than answers the need of the awakened soul. But it is to Christ, not to us, that the witness is borne. It is in Him we learn what it means to be a son of God.

We read in the first chapter of the gospel of John, "To as many as received Him" (that is, Christ), "to them gave He the right to be *children of God*." And so, too, the first message the Lord Jesus sent to His disciples after His resurrection presents this new relationship as a now accomplished fact, because of His work being finished. He had died and was risen, and says to Mary Magdalene, "Go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." (John xx. 17.) He puts them in the position and relationship in which He Himself stood. God takes us to be His children—His "sons and daughters." Christ suffered in order that we might receive the adoption, in order that He might carry out and make true as regards us personally the revelation He brought us from God; that is, that He is THE FATHER. Christ was the Son essentially; but in order that I, a poor ruined sinner, may know God as the Father, I must be His child, and for that redemption was necessary. God revealed Himself as "the Father" in Christ. The Lord says, "I am come in my Father's name." And again, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." (John v. 43; xiv. 7.) But He so revealed Himself that we might receive the revelation and be brought personally to enjoy it. Although this testimony is so simple and positive in the word of God, our hearts are very slow to receive it. Like the prodigal son, after he had come to himself and was on his way back to the father's house,

we think the position of a hired servant would suit us better than that of a son. Provided God assures to us food for the body and raiment to put on, we would be content and ready, like Jacob at Bethel, to take Him to be our God. That comes from thinking of ourselves rather than of Him. It is what happens when an upright soul is occupied with itself. It can get no relief from itself either, but is overwhelmed with the feeling of its own wretchedness, and never thinks of turning to God to find out what *He* can do, not for our sakes, but for Christ's sake, and for His own glory. God has other thoughts about us. He will make us His servants, it is true, but first of all He makes us "sons." A servant of God is surely the highest title for a creature as to his activity in this world. Christ was the perfect Servant, a divine Example for all who come to God by Him; but He was so because He was THE SON. And *we* can only know this kind of service on the condition of enjoying first of all "the *adoption*."

It is in Christ we learn what it is to be a child of God. Christ manifested as Son of God in this world that eternal life which He came to communicate to us. He *was* it, and He says, "I am come that they might have life." He brings us into the relationship with the Father, of which He was personally the expression. "No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." "In Him we have contemplated a glory as of an only-begotten with the Father." (John i. 14, 18.) But that is not all. Christ said to His disciples, "I ascend." He has gone up to the Father, and is seated at His right hand, already anointed with the oil of gladness in the presence of God, where is

"fulness of joy." And the very same scripture which speaks of this mentions that, being thus crowned, He has "companions" whom God associates with Him. He is above them, of course, but they are associated with Him who is in that place of glory, and consequently they can look on to the time when they too shall be there with Him. They are the "many sons" whom it pleases God to bring unto glory—the children that Christ came to gather out and bring together in one, while awaiting the time when they shall see the Saviour as He is, and be changed into His likeness. (See Heb. ii. 9, 10; i. 9; John xvii. 24; Phil. iii. 20, 21.)

He is "above" His fellows in every sense. He has entered the first into the glory, while they are still in this world witnessing and suffering for Him in the place where He was rejected. But His presence up there as MAN has opened heaven to "men," and already prepared a place in the Father's house for all who believe in Him. It is His presence there as Man in the glory which has prepared the place for them; and He has sent down the Holy Ghost from the Father in order to reveal to us practically what sonship is, and make us enjoy it, giving us to cry, "Abba, Father." The Holy Ghost directs our hearts to Christ, and occupies us with Him, teaching us in His person what sonship is, that we may enjoy individually the "adoption" we have received.

Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. He is also the first-born from among the dead, and as such He opens to us the door of adoption, that we may participate with Him in the blessings resulting from His finished work. Had He *not* died, He would have remained alone in His personal

glory, and there would have been no possibility of our being associated with Him. Adoption is a consequence of redemption, as we know from Galatians iv. 5. It was as risen from the dead that Jesus announced to His disciples the blessed relationship into which His atoning sacrifice had brought them, "My Father and your Father." And when He had gone up into glory, God sent the Holy Spirit to unite us to Christ in the glory. It is "the Spirit of His Son." (Gal. iv. 6.) God associates us thus with His own Son, who is the first-born among many brethren, so that His title of "first-born" might be given to us with Him, and that we might thus form the assembly of the first-born who are registered in heaven. (Heb. xii. 23.) He makes too His heirs joint-heirs with Christ. This is the fruit of redemption we have already seen in type, when considering the deliverance of the people of Israel from the land of Egypt, and the consecration of the first-born to God. In the type we see the moral principle; in the person of Christ glorified we see the accomplishment of the marvellous work of redemption; and the Holy Spirit, who unites the believer to Christ in the glory, shows us in Him the image, the perfect model after God's own thought, of the redeemed family that God is going to bring to the glory where Christ is already.

"When we see Him as He is we shall be like Him; for as we have borne the image of the one made of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly One." (1 John iii. 2; 1 Cor. xv. 49.) It is, however, needful that another testimony should complete that which we have just been considering; it is needful for our hearts, and that we may have a good conscience in

the presence of God; it is needful also in order that we may enjoy really the witness of the Spirit as to our adoption. For how could we freely and happily take the place of a child in relationship with our Father in heaven, if we had not received from Him a nature which suits His perfect holiness, and if we had not the assurance that all our sins are blotted out? But He gives us this nature, a nature capable of enjoying Him; He gives us this assurance too, and both of them in the person of the CHRIST; for it is to Christ He ever bears witness.

The special testimony of which we speak was given the moment after He had accomplished the work of redemption and yielded up His Spirit to His Father. "This is He that came by water and by blood, Jesus the Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, for the Spirit is truth." (1 John v. 6.) The blood and the water which flowed from the pierced side of a dead Christ are the double witness of the efficacy of His work for us. (John xix. 34, 35.)

"The blood" speaks of divine justification, which God makes ours in virtue of the purification of sins having been already made. He forgives them; for "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son purifies from all sin." He bore our sins in His own body on the tree.

"The water" is the expression of the purifying power of the death of Christ as applied to our hearts and lives by the word of God. We need to have our hearts "purified by faith" (Acts xv. 9) in order that we may stand before God in holiness. God places us first of all in a position of absolute holiness in virtue *of the* sacrifice of Christ (Heb. x. 10, 14); and then the

Spirit presents Christ to us in the word, so that we may feed upon Him, and especially on His death, in order to maintain in us practical holiness for the daily walk, and accomplish in us that growth in grace and in the knowledge of God which alone renders this holiness possible, and perfects it in His fear and in communion with Him. (2 Cor. vii. 1.) On the one hand we read, that being justified by faith, by the blood of Christ, we have peace with God; on the other, in virtue of redemption it is said that "both He that sanctifies and those *sanctified* are all of one;" they are identified in God's sight. (Rom. v. 1, 9; Heb. ii. 11.)

Here then are "the three that bear witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood," and we see how they agree in one. The Spirit sets before us the person of the Son of God, and the efficacy of His work. God bears witness to HIS SON. And therefore he who receives this testimony enjoys solid assurance in his soul, divine certainty that nothing can shake. He has confidence towards God. In the person of the Son of God we see what it is to be a son in Him; we learn practically what sonship means. By His death this relationship has become possible for us, and God in His grace introduces us there even now, while waiting for the glory, giving us a "good conscience" by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He who believes in Jesus is a child of God. One becomes so in believing. (Gal. iii. 26.) But then this relationship is inseparable from the standing of absolute holiness in which the death of Christ places us, and in which we have to "keep the feast with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" in view of the rest of God which awaits us.

We have to walk *with Him* in a way that is in

harmony with His holiness and righteousness, "worthy of Him who has called us to His own kingdom and glory." Being completely delivered from the burden of our sins through Christ's work, we receive from Him "a good conscience," and the heart is thus made free to enjoy communion with God, and learn that He dwells with us. (Eph. ii. 22.) For He Himself assures us that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin; and He receives us in favour according to the full value in His sight of this precious blood. It is written, "Ye who once were afar off are brought nigh by the blood of Christ;" and again, "His grace wherein He has taken us into favour in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood." (Eph. i. 7; ii. 13.) It is well to add a remark as to the order in which the truths of holiness and righteousness are presented in the Word and applied to us practically. Purification, of which the figure is "water"—that is, the word of God divinely applied to the heart and the conscience—is that which is required by the holiness of God with whom we have to do. Justification, on the other hand, is the pressing need of the awakened soul as soon as it finds itself in God's presence, having been brought there by His grace. Now we are justified by the "blood" of Christ. (Rom. v. 9.) Both of these things are found together in the death of Christ surely; but when we come to the practical teaching of Scripture it is evident that what refers more especially to God must have the first place; that is to say, the sanctification of the person precedes justification. We have found it so in the types we have been considering, and it comes out more remarkably still perhaps in the ordinances for the consecration of the priests. (Lev.

viii. 6, 30.) They are washed before they receive the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifice. The washing is the *first* act; the sprinkling of the blood and oil the *last*. The epistles teach us the same moral order. (1 Cor. vi. 11; 2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Peter i. 2.)

But again, we must not forget to distinguish carefully between the perfect standing God gives us in virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, and the progress in practical holiness every saint makes in growing in the knowledge of God. But this progress is only effectuated in proportion as we lay hold more and more simply and really of the practical application of the death of Christ to our entire being, the Holy Spirit occupying us with Him who is now in the glory, and who is about to come to take us to Himself into the Father's house, where His presence as Man has already prepared us a place. W. J. L.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

BUT God does not leave His people to get on as best they can. He has provided His word, living, and powerful, which can do what the keenest blade cannot, pierce even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (12, 13.) Thus by the Word the believer may detect the springs of his actions, and see all in the light of the divine presence; "for all things are naked and opened to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." But more is wanted than the searching and dissecting action of the Word. We need grace for the wilderness walk. Now this the High Priest procures, so

the writer next dwells (iv. 14–viii. 13) on the present service of the High Priest, before dwelling on the sacrifice and offering up of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The grace needed the High Priest procures. Able to succour them that are tempted (ii. 18), He is also able to sympathise with His people, having been in all points tempted like as they are—sin apart. He knows what is needed, and intercedes for us with God, that we coming to the throne of grace may reap the fruit of His intercession by receiving mercy and seasonable help. (iv. 14–16.) Having then a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, *i.e.* has gone up to the throne, Jesus, Son of God, let us hold fast the confession. A great High Priest He is called. Aaron was high priest. Jesus, the Son of God, is greater. The Hebrews then were in this no losers by embracing Christianity. The Jews might boast of the Aaronic line of priesthood; these Hebrews could say, "The Son of God is our High Priest."

But this new priesthood, centred in Him who is in heaven, must be shown to be really of God, else none of those on whose behalf the Aaronic priesthood was instituted would be authorized to turn away from it. So Ps. cx. is quoted to prove it. The One who called Him His Son is the One who addressed Him as Priest after the order of Melchisedec. And He has passed through death, having learnt, too, obedience by the things which He suffered. A High Priest who first passed through death, having learnt obedience by what He suffered, and having experienced deliverance by God out of the deepest trials, who among the sons of Aaron could be compared with Him for fitness to *understand* the difficulties of the people, and to

sympathize with each and all in their need? Each year that Aaron lived he might be better able to understand the personal difficulties of the people. But the Lord had learnt them all, and fully, ere He entered on His office of High Priest. What encouragement was there in this for the saints in trial!

But the apostle could have unfolded more had the spiritual state of the Hebrews not hindered it. They had become γεγόνατε, dull of hearing, needing to be taught the elements of the beginning of the oracles of God, when for the time they ought to have been able to teach others; and they had become such as had need of milk, and not of solid food. They had become this, let the reader observe. It was not the condition in which the gospel had found them. It was the condition into which they had got through not going on unto perfection; *i.e.* full growth.

To that the sacred writer would lead them. The word of the beginning of Christ, truth common to Jews and Christians, was not all that God was teaching, nor would that establish souls. He would therefore pass on from it to perfection; *i.e.* what belonged to full growth (vi. 1–3), not now occupying himself with such as had enjoyed every advantage a professor could share in without the heart being really changed. (4–8.) Fruitfulness through the truth working in power was what was desired, as the illustration of the ground shows us, and explains for any that need it, the real bearing of verses 4–6.

Two plots of ground receiving in common rain from heaven—the one fruitful, producing herbs meet for him by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; the other, not requiting the labour bestowed upon it, and

producing only briers and thorns, is found worthless, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. So of those called Christians. All enjoying the same outward advantages, those really converted are fruitful, the rest, mere professors, are unfruitful. With such, if they fall away, he could do nothing. They had heard, and had professed to receive, all Christian teaching. These then he would leave, addressing himself to those to whom he was writing, who had given evidence of the reality of their faith. (9, 10.) Yet they needed stirring up to show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, and to imitate those who through faith and patience have been inheritors of the promises. Now all was really secure, God's promise and God's oath made that certain, and the entrance of the forerunner, Jesus, within the veil made it plain. (11–20.)

And He is High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. On the value of this for the saints the writer would now insist (vii.), reminding them of Melchisedec's history and of Abraham's interview with him (Gen. xiv.); and how the patriarch, by giving him tithes of all, and by receiving his blessing, acknowledged his superiority. Hence a priesthood after this order must be more excellent than one after the Aaronic order; for, first, Levi, as it were, paid tithes to Melchisedec as being in the loins of Abraham (9, 10); second, the institution of this order of priesthood, after the induction of Aaron and of his sons into their priesthood, indicates a setting aside of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof (for the law made nothing perfect), and the bringing in of a better hope by the which we draw

nigh to God (18, 19); third, the Lord was made priest by oath, which Aaron and his sons never were (20–22); and lastly, He has, like Melchisedec of old, an unchangeable priesthood (23, 24), whence He is able also to save completely those who approach by Him to God, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Further, He who is our High Priest has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the holy places, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. He is also mediator of a better covenant, the new covenant, established on the footing of better promises. (viii.)

Now what could Judaism offer in comparison with all this? Who among the tribe of Levi could present such credentials, and provide what is needed for the wilderness path, as He who, uniting the functions of Moses and Aaron in His own person, was addressed by God as High Priest after the order of Melchisedec?

A minister of the holy places and of the true tabernacle the Lord is. So we read next of the service which He has performed inside the veil. Having dwelt on His present priestly service, as meeting what the saints needed in their pathway on earth, the writer now proceeds to point out the superiority of the Lord's sacrifice of Himself above all that the Mosaic ritual could provide, by the shedding of His blood (ix.), and the excellency of the sacrifice of Himself. (x.)

There was the holiest on earth, and at the date of this epistle the Mosaic ritual was still carried on. There is the sanctuary on high, of which this epistle treats. Into the former the High Priest went alone once every year with the blood of bulls and of goats.

Into the latter the Lord Jesus Christ, the High Priest of good things to come, has entered by His own blood, and remains there, having found eternal redemption. Now blood had a prominent and important place in the ritual of old; so on the surpassing excellency of the blood of Christ we are taught to dwell. It purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God. By His death redemption of the sins that were under the first covenant is effected, that they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. By His blood too forgiveness is procured; on it the new covenant will rest, and the heavenly things themselves are purged with better sacrifices than any earth could have provided. For into heaven itself has He entered now to appear in the presence of God for us. Not to offer Himself afresh, for that He did once when manifested here for the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And He will appear again the second time to them that look for Him without sin unto salvation.

Once He has suffered, never to repeat it. His death was enough. By God's will believers are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (x. 10.) By His one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified (14), and has sat down in token that all has been done in the sanctuary that He intended and came to do. Thus we learn what God thinks of the sacrifice, since we are sanctified by it. We see what the Lord thinks of it, since He has sat down, never to renew it. And the Holy Ghost attests its sufficiency, as He tells us by the prophet (Jer. xxxi. 34) that the sins and iniquities of the redeemed people God will remember no more. Hence there can be no more offering for sin, and believers have boldness to enter the

holiest by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way, which He has consecrated for us through the veil; that is, His flesh. And having a great priest over the house of God, we are to approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, sprinkled as to our hearts from an evil conscience, and washed as to our bodies with pure water, holding fast the confession of hope without wavering, caring for one another, assembling together, and exhorting one the other as we see the day approaching. The Lord will come. The just shall live by faith, but in one who draws back God will have no pleasure. (15–39.)

Hereupon we are reminded how the worthies of old walked by faith (xi.), the order in which they appeared on the scene illustrating the life of faith for the Christian. With what interest a Hebrew must have read this portion of the epistle, learning from it how God had been ordering the appearance on earth of person after person herein mentioned in pursuance of a design which has now been unfolded.

Commencing with a statement of what faith is, the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen, we learn that it takes God at His word (xi. 3), and by it the person connected with the sacrifice, as illustrated in the case of Abel, is accepted before God. Then in one of two positions will the saint be found, either, like Enoch, to be taken away ere the judgment comes; or, like Noah, to be preserved on earth through it. Christians will be in this like Enoch, the godly remnant of the earthly people like Noah. But if we stand accepted in connection with the sacrifice, awaiting the being caught up to be with Christ, we are made at once pilgrims here, whose home is else-

where. Hence faith for the pilgrimage walk, illustrated in the lives of the patriarchs, is next set before us. They looked for a city prepared for them by God (10). Abraham by counting on the fulfilment of his hopes in the heir raised, as it were, from the dead (17–19); Isaac by blessing Jacob and Esau, showing that the inheritance does not run in the order of nature (20); Jacob by blessing both the sons of Joseph, intimating that the double portion belongs to him who was rejected of his brethren (21), to be made good in the fullest way to the Lord, who will have heaven and earth as His inheritance; and Joseph by giving commandment concerning his bones (22), all tell us of the proper expectation and desire of the saints—the full deliverance of God's people, coupled with the wish to rest in the portion allotted them by God.

But if there is the pilgrimage walk, there will also be conflict. So illustrations of faith in times of conflict next come; yet all in the order of history (23–31), followed by examples of the life of faith in times of declension (32–34), and in times of persecution. (35–40.) Yet encouraging as this exposition of Old Testament times must have been, no one of these worthies could be a perfect example for them or for us. One only of all who have walked on earth is fitted to be that, even Jesus, the Leader and Perfecter of the faith, who, having endured the cross, despising the shame, is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (xii. 1–3.) From Old Testament history we learn that the walk of faith was nothing new. In the Lord Jesus' walk on earth we have the perfect pattern of it, and in His exaltation we see where the road will surely lead us.

Exhortations then follow, and encouragements, first

by reminding them that their sufferings were a proof that they were God's sons (4–17), and next by telling them to what they had come; viz., above and beyond all Jewish expectation and portion, and above all angelic ranks on high, to God the Judge of all, from whom receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, they were to serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear. "For also our God is a consuming fire."

With further exhortations as to brotherly love, hospitality, remembrance of those in bonds, and marriage; with warnings too against uncleanness and discontent, their leaders who had passed away by death they were called to remember, and to imitate their faith. But if leaders pass away, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Hence, they were not to be carried away by divers and strange doctrines, but to have the heart established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited those who have been occupied therein. But Christians have an altar, whereof no Jew could eat, as they feed on Him who was the sin-offering, who suffered without the gate. Since, then, that is the case, they must go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach; yet offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually, the fruit of their lips giving thanks to His name; doing good and communicating likewise; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Then, exhorting subjection to their leaders, and asking for an interest in their prayers, and expressing his wishes for them (17–21), the writer closes his letter. What a communication it was! How it opened up the Old Testament, and ministered Christ as Apostle and High Priest, to establish the Hebrews in the doctrines and continued confession of Christianity. C. E. S.

GOD'S ESTIMATE OF THE BLOOD.

It is God's estimate of the blood of Christ that is the measure of my acceptance with Himself. It gives me peace. I have been reconciled to God in the consciousness of the perfect love that gave Christ; but besides that I am brought into perfect favour with God—the favour which rests upon Christ. It is not merely that old things are gone, and my sins washed away in the blood of Christ, but the perfect love of God is revealed in doing it. I come back to God in unbounded confidence and infinite love. This is the place of the Christian. Christ being in us, teaches us, and conducts down into our souls this love of God; and the heart is thus reconciled in blessed peace and righteousness, resting in the consciousness of His perfect grace towards us.

J. N. D.

THE WELL IS DEEP.

O Lamb of God—the Fountain,
My springs are hid in Thee;
My soul's deep well and fulness
Pierced in Thine agony.
Thy love-streams here I 'm drinking,
Alone through Thy shed blood;
My well-spring Thou in glory,
Thou precious Lamb of God.

C. F. C.

London: W. H. Broom, 24, Paternoster Square.